







WHEN BRUCE

* * *

BROUGHT A CHAIR INTO THE CORNER BEHIND THE INSTRUMENT SHE WELCOMED HIM
WITH A SMILE.—Page 73.

BROADOAKS

BY

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"OBLIVION," "PRINCESS," "A SELF-MADE MAN,"
"BURKETT'S LUCK," "WHITE HERON,"
ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED



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ILLUSTRATIONS.

When Bruce * * * brought a chair
into the corner behind the instrument
she welcome him with a smile, - - Frontispiece.

And planted herself with lusty barking
in front of a gentleman who was ad-
vancing, - - - - - page.
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"If Miss Rebie was to marry that gent'-
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BROADOAKS.

CHAPTER I.

THERE had been Kennedys in Virginia for considerably upward of a century. In fact, ever since one Julian Kennedy, surgeon in the royal navy, left his ship at Jamestown with a grant in his pocket empowering him to take up as much land in the James river valley as would suffice for the maintenance of himself and his family, and to have and to hold the same, subject to quit-rents to the crown, for the honor and glory of God and the King.

In pursuance of his privileges, the founder of the Virginia branch of the Kennedy family had pushed on up the river, in the track of one of the many expeditions into the transmontane that had followed that of Governor Spotswood, and located among the spurs of the Blue Ridge, modestly appropriating for

himself and his posterity twenty miles of the arable lands lying on either side of the river. Being a man of enterprise and action, he had gone vigorously to work on his new possessions, bringing over settlers to clear and improve his lands, arranging his affairs and establishing his family. His method of clearing the "forest primeval" and making the soil available for agriculture had been unique and well worthy the attention of political economists. Like most great schemes it had been simple, and had mainly consisted in planting his retainers, in hastily constructed log-cabins, here and there, on his estate, with an axe and six months provisions, to a man, and the comprehensive order to "cut themselves out."

When matters had been arranged to his liking, Dr. Kennedy had left his people to follow out his instructions and betaken himself again to his profession on the high seas in order to discharge his quit-rents. His wife, from all tradition a most intrepid dame, had ruled in his stead; and, doubtless, proved herself an efficient regent, for when,

after an absence of seven years, her lord had returned to her, he found that, under her administration, his retainers had obeyed him to the letter, and that forest and undergrowth were giving place to fields of corn and tobacco.

There had been a story—created and circulated by the malevolent and foolish—to the effect that during all those seven years Dr. Kennedy had never communicated with his wife by word nor sign. And, that, so far from resenting the neglect, Madam Kennedy—as she had been called, had sustained the separation from her husband with exasperating fortitude; riding over the vast estate on her black horse, Tempest, with a pistol at her saddle bow, and a volume of Chaucer in her pocket (for the lady affected to be literary), attending to her affairs and preserving an appearance of the most unruffled tranquillity. Indeed, the provocation given, by her indifference, to comment, seems to have been so great that bold spirits went so far as to aver that, believing her liege lord safely gathered to his fathers, Madam Kennedy

had entertained thoughts of another mate, and that Dr. Kennedy had reappeared only just in time to preserve his wife from bigamy. Such calumnies, of course, were baseless, save in malice, and no true Kennedy would for a moment give them credence, for, with them, it is a well known fact, that among the family archives, rest sundry ancient bills and letters, yellow with age, and quaintly spelled and worded, wherein is set forth that Dr. Kennedy, as became a loving lord and husband, did on such and such a date, cause supplies of various sorts, including "a jocund satin petticoat and a bodice picked out with silver" and a "cloak of carmine taffety such as beseemeth ye ladyship's degree," to be conveyed from the mother country to the colony of Virginia for the use and behoof of Mistress Julian Kennedy.

After his seven years of voyaging Dr. Kennedy had abandoned the sea and settled on his estate, giving his attention thereafter to the rearing of children and race-horses, and the cultivation of tobacco. As his sons had grown to manhood he had given to each

a generous slice of his land, and settled them around him, so that in course of time quite a colony of Kennedys had been established in that twenty mile radius. There, through succeeding years, they had lived and quarreled, intermarried and fought, loving and abusing one another with great satisfaction to themselves and, as there was still plenty of elbow-room, little harm to the community. They had served their king and country in judicial capacities and the house of burgesses, and afterward their country alone during the stormy times of the Revolution.

In the slumberous season that followed the establishment and recognition of the republic they had allowed themselves to gradually sink into the indolent cultured life of Southern country gentlemen; but every now and again the family would furnish the commonwealth with an orator, lawyer, or physician of note, in addition to many famous beauties, so that the old name had been kept green within the memories of men.

The outbreak of the civil war had, of

course, found all the Kennedys, able to bear arms, enrolled in the service of the Confederacy, and the overthrow of their hopes had left them impoverished and broken down.

Colonel Julian Kennedy, the present owner of the old family seat of Broadoaks, had been left a widower, about the beginning of the war, with four children; two sons, nearly grown, and two daughters—the latter small children, one little more than an infant. The sons, George and Julian, lads of sixteen and eighteen, had insisted, like many other brave hearted boys, on responding to that last mad appeal of a dying nation for troops, and had fallen, a useless sacrifice to a broken cause. The little girls, Bernard and Rebecca—commonly called “Rebie”—had been too young at the time of their family misfortunes to be seriously affected by them. Of their mother they had little or no recollection, and her place had been supplied to them by their grandmother, and also, in a measure, by their colored “Mammy.” Looking backward through the years, the episode of the war was to the girls like some shadowy, far-

away dream, filled with distorted images, and known rather from hearsay than from tangible, individual memories. Of the vital excitement which had permeated all things and caused life to seem as though lived amid an atmosphere surcharged with electricity they, of course, knew nothing.

To Bernard, the elder of the pair, would come, dimly, at times, recollection of strange men in gray uniforms, who had played with and kissed her; and more distinct memories of the horses which had stood always saddled in the stables, on which Uncle Peyton, the colored hostler, had let her ride up and down the stable yard with baby Rebie, proudly astride, in front of her. Then would come intervals of quiet, when there would be no soldiers, and no horses to ride, and the plantation work would go on as usual. Even the end was indistinct, although Mammy would often go over for them the sad, sad story of the loss of their brother George, the fall of Richmond, and of how the sound of the guns had come to them all through that last desperate march to

Appomattox; and of how aged and wan their grandmother's face had grown as the leaden hours had dragged along bringing nearer and more near the certainty that the curtain had fallen forever on the saddest, bloodiest drama of the age.

The only day that stood out clearly in Bernard's memory was the one on which their uncle Edward Kennedy and young Geoffrey Bruce had brought home their father and Julian, both so still and white. The tears had gathered thick in Uncle Ned's eyes as he kissed them, and had fallen in bright drops on little Rebie's curls. Then Julian had been laid to rest in the old burying-ground by George's side; and for a long time they had never seen their father—only their grandmother's anxious face, and Mammy's warning finger if they should forget and make a noise.

After a time their father had grown strong again, and able to take into his hands and piece together the broken fragments of his life. They had become accustomed to the sound of the crutches instead of the quick,

firm step which formerly had “rung through passageway and hall” of the old mansion. And, with the passing of many seasons, the graves had been covered thick with myrtle and with grass; and Time’s merciful finger had trained the ivy of memory over the heart ruins.

CHAPTER II.

“BERNARD!” exclaimed Rebie, one pleasant morning in the last of May, “Bernard, do put down your work, and come and tell me who this man can be. Quick! *run!* before he gets out of sight behind the trees. I’ve been watching him ‘*peruse*’ down the road, as Uncle Peyton would say, for five minutes. He resembles James’ horseman; there is mystery in his maneuvers and melancholy in his sombrero. The way he scrutinizes the house is positively weird. I can’t make up my mind whether he is an artist, a prospective burglar, or an old acquaintance trying to refresh his memory.”

“Probably an agent for mineral lands or patent bed-springs,” hazarded Bernard, placidly threading her needle and refusing to be beguiled from her easy chair. “Four have been here already this week. The iron ore and conches of this region appear to be occupying public attention just now. Or

maybe, since you say he scans the house speculatively, this man sells paint, or lighting rods, or roofing, and observes that we cry aloud for all three. Don't let him see you, Rebie, or he'll pounce down on us and stick like a burr until dinner time."

"He's getting off his horse now," announced Rebie. "I wish you'd come and look! He's coming up the yard and he hasn't any saddle-bags. I don't believe he's an agent at all."

Bernard rose in alarm. "Coming in!" she exclaimed, "and father not in the house to hammer into his head that we don't want any of *anything* he's got to sell! Shake your head at him, Rebie! Shake it hard! Oh, dear, I'm so tired of having to impress it on these men that the South has no money for improvements."

Rebie laughed. "It's a gentleman, Bernard. Come and see for yourself. He fastened his horse to the old horse-shoe Julian nailed to the poplar tree outside the gate. I wonder how he knew it was there."

Bernard advanced and peeped over her sister's shoulder, half hidden by the curtain. The gentleman was ascending the steps, and she could obtain a fairly satisfactory view of him. The sight brought inspiration.

"I know who he is," she proclaimed. "Mammy told me this morning that Geoffrey Bruce had come home, and this must be he. I forgot to tell you. He's come over to see father. I *wish* he hadn't—so soon, that is. It will upset father, dreadfully. He used to be intimate with our boys, you know, and was always here. He was in father's troop and with him during all that terrible old time. It must be fully ten years since he left the neighborhood. He went away just after his mother died. How he has changed!"

"I remember him a little now," Rebie thoughtfully observed. "He used to ride a big gray horse and take me on the saddle in front of him, sometimes. The day Julian was buried he held me in his arms at the grave, and I got frightened and cried myself to sleep on his shoulder. There goes Mammy to the door. Oh, I *wish* he hadn't come over until

we got used to the idea of his being at home again!"

The pair silently listened to the sound of opening and closing doors, and of footfalls along the hall. Both faces were eager, expectant, and a trifle sad. In a moment Mammy entered; in reality elated and important; but thinking it necessary to dissemble, and to shake her turbaned head as though oppressed by woe unutterable.

"Chil'un," she announced, in a tone of varying intonations, "young Mr. Bruce done come over to see your pa. I tole him Mars Julian war out 'pon de plantation; but I 'lowed you-all would be glad to see him. Lord! Miss Bernard, honey, it went right th'ough me, it did, fur to see him livin' and standin' dar, arter all dese years, an' my two blessed boys whar used to be so merry an' joysome wid him—" Mammy paused and lifted her apron to her eyes.

Rebie suspended the operation of brushing her curly black hair and administered a consolatory pat or two on the old woman's shoulder.

"There, there, Mammy, don't cry, please. Of course it brought back the boys to you. It will to poor father. You just be on the lookout for him and let him know that Mr. Bruce is here. Shall I go into the parlor now, Bernard, or wait for you?"

"Go, please. I must change my dress. I won't be long."

Rebie walked slowly along the hall and opened the parlor door. What manner of man would he be, she wondered, this stranger, who was yet no stranger, but a part of the painful past? As she entered, a gentleman rose from the sofa and advanced to meet her with extended hand. Rebie gave a comprehensive glance which embraced every detail of appearance and costume as she placed her fingers in his. He was a man of two or three and thirty; not tall—indeed, scarcely taller than was the girl herself; but with a sturdy, well-knit figure, a good head, well set on manly looking shoulders, a kind, handsome face and a pair of hazel eyes that met hers with a pleasant smile in them.

Rebie liked the face, and her manner became warmly cordial on the instant.

"You can't imagine," he said, in reply to her words of welcome, "how glad I am to see you and the old place again; or what a delight the mere being at *home* is to me. During an absence such as mine a man comes to realize the power of early associations, and to feel the love of home and yearning for familiar scenes and faces drawing him, as he grows older, always in one direction with a force which defies resistance."

Rebie seated herself in a low chair and motioned him again to his place on the sofa near her.

"Time weans most men from their old associations," she averred. "They niche into the new environment quite comfortably, and when brought again amid the old, feel cramped and ill at ease."

Bruce smiled at her moralizing tone. "It depends on the *man* after all," he said. "I'm a conservative sort of fellow myself, and never tried to take root out there. I always intended to come back. It was only a

question of time. And about three weeks ago, in Texas, such a big wave of homesickness broke over me that I felt like a creature drowning. I've had many a touch of *mal du pays* during the years; but nothing like that. My call had come, and it seemed to me that if I didn't breathe Virginia air and see Virginia hills again I'd die. It may sound womanish, but it's true."

"“The man be more of woman, she of man,”” quoted Rebie, gaily. “Don't apologize, Mr. Bruce. I see you are approaching the ideal state. And when, if I may inquire, did the homesick wave deposit you at your own front door?”

“Yesterday afternoon. I neglected to serve a notice on my people, and so had the joy of trudging over from the station, and of frightening poor old Sophy nearly into a spasm. I got home almost on the edge of dark, and dust and travel had rendered my aspect sinister. Sophy beheld in me a marauder bent on rapine; she gave one horrified glance, yelled, ‘ Oh, Lordy, dars de

wuss one yet!’ dodged back into the kitchen and refused to parley with me.”

“That was a sorry welcome,” Rebie laughed. “How did you convince her that you were yourself?”

“Oh, I discoursed persuasively through the keyhole. At first she scouted every word; said she ‘done got used to tramps, an’ wa’n’t gwine bleeve nothin’ dey said; nor let no stranger in de house, n’other.’ She likewise recommended me to go over the hill to the overseer’s house where she promised me cheer and comfort. Finally, however, by recapitulating one or two escapades of my boyhood, knowledge of which was sacred to us two alone, I induced her to open the door, and, when further oratory had established my identity, her joy was exceeding great.”

“Good old Sophy! What a faithful watchdog she is! About six months ago some negroes in the next county harbored a tramp for a night or two and he gave them all small-pox. They’ve been afraid to show hospitality to wanderers ever since. One

can't blame them, either; negroes are so helpless in sickness."

They chatted on for a few moments and then Rebie, oblivious of previous statements to the contrary, remarked genially:

"I'm glad you came to see us at once, Mr. Bruce. It was friendly of you."

Bruce looked gratified. "My footsteps turned instinctively toward Broadoaks as in the old days," he heartily responded. "How wonderfully little the place has changed; gone down somewhat, like most things in the South; but with the same *home* look about it as of old. I stopped at the gate a moment to refresh my memory before coming in."

"We saw you," acknowledged Rebie. "We were at the window in a state of excitement mingled with dismay over your approach. We took you for a vender of patent medicines or bed-springs, and thirsted for portcullis and draw-bridge to defend ourselves withal."

"How unkind you are!" remonstrated Bruce. "I flattered myself that my appear-

ance was picturesque and my approach a poem. When did Mexican sombreros become the insignia of patent pills in Virginia? Miss Kennedy, I'm disappointed in you. You should have more imagination."

Rebie glanced up, amused, and, catching the laughter in the hazel eyes, felt the ten years in which they had been unknown to each other shrivel up and vanish.

"Your inner consciousness should have informed you of my identity," Bruce proceeded, "considering the fact that you were once called my 'little wife,' and in that character exercised much authority over me. Don't you remember the day you stole off to the old sheep field after chinquapins; and how we sought you sorrowing? I found you stuck in the middle of a brier-patch, and filling the air with lamentations. Your dress was torn, your left shoe lost, your hands streaming with gore from the caresses of the briars; and you had nine green chinquapins in your pocket for your sister. From these perils, with unprecedented heroism, I rescued you, and bore you home in my arms. And

what is my reward? To be clean forgotten in ten short years!" He regarded her with mock tragedy.

"A thrilling story," mocked Rebie, "and, as I believe, utterly without foundation. No; I don't remember anything about it, and you don't either. It's a transparent effort to establish a claim on my gratitude."

"Which you don't intend to allow, I see," retorted Bruce. "Oh, the meanness of repudiating an honest obligation! Ask Mammy if the annal isn't authentic. She'll bear me out. By the way, how little Mammy has changed. I could have imagined myself a boy again when she opened the door, and almost expected you to come to meet me in a short frock with your curls on your shoulders as you used to wear them. It was a shock to be welcomed by a stately young woman in ceremonious fashion. Other things seem the same; but looking at you, Bernard—or must it be Miss Kennedy?—I realize that years indeed have passed."

"So," exclaimed Rebie, much amused, "you thought it was Bernard, did you? And *she*

was the heroine of your reminiscences! I withdraw my disclaimer. It was stupid of me not to introduce myself when I first came in. I'm Rebie."

Bruce looked half incredulous.

"Rebie—baby Rebie!" he repeated. "By Jove, you don't say so! It hardly seems possible that little Rebie could grow up. I always think of her as the tiny curly-haired creature who used to ride on my shoulder, or in front of the saddle of the old gray horse."

Rebie made some smiling rejoinder to the effect that he must have been unusually fond of children, since, from his own account, he had played nursemaid to both her sister and herself. In the midst of their badinage the sound of light footsteps, and the regular tap-tap of crutches advanced along the hall. Rebie's expression changed on the instant.

"It's Bernard and father," she said, and added: "Please don't take any notice, or get him a chair, or anything. He can't bear to be reminded of his helplessness. He don't notice when Bernard and I wait on him,

because he's used to it; but with strangers it's different."

The young man's face softened. He remembered his old friend so tall and strong; foremost always in all manly sports and deeds of daring. It must go hard with such a nature to be a cripple. He advanced to meet his old commander with a full heart, and something suspiciously like moisture in the hazel eyes.

The men clasped hands and stood regarding each other with that in their throats which prevented utterance. To the minds and memories of both by-gone scenes returned with startling vividness. Again they felt the high hopes, the bounding courage; again gloried in the pride of manhood, the pride of soldierhood; again knew the thrill of battle, the anxiety of counsel, the weariness of march and bivouac, the restless fluctuations from hope to despair; again they heard the wild music of the battle-cry; felt the mad excitement of the charge, the glow of victory, and the anguish of defeat.

And through the chaos of conflicting memories one or two scenes stood boldly out,

demanding special recognition. That day below Richmond, when the tide of battle had turned against them and the reserves had been ordered to advance from their position on an acclivity to the left to the support of a division, sore pressed. The gallant band of boys had swept past them, and for an instant—long enough for a father to recognize his son, a friend to know his playmate—through the smoke and din of the battle, a face had shown distinctly—a fair, beardless face, pale as alabaster, the blue eyes aflame with a strange light; and a voice had rung in their ears; a boy's voice, soon to be silenced in death, shouting above the infernal roar: "Forward! Charge, for your homes, and for Virginia!"

And that other scene—the lonely farmhouse wherein the tragic close of four years of tragedy had been enacted. The disbanded troops grouped about, tattered, famished, well nigh broken-hearted with the knowledge that courage, endurance and suffering had availed them nothing; that the struggle was over,

and that it had been useless. And after that the pitifulness of the home-comings.

With all this between them is it any wonder that actors in the scenes, meeting for the first time since those other days, should stand with clasped hands and moistened eyes fearing to speak?

CHAPTER III.

FOR the next half hour the talk turned principally on the changes in the neighborhood during the past ten years. The marriages, births, deaths, comings and goings were all recapitulated, as well as the sales and dismal passing into alien hands of many of the old plantations. Some families had moved away and their places had been filled by strangers. Others, deep rooted as the oaks which surrounded their dwellings, had clung to the soil with desperate tenacity, grimly defiant of debt and lawsuits. All the information which Colonel Kennedy and his daughters could supply relative to home affairs was hearkened to with interest by Bruce. As he claimed for himself, he was a conservative man, possessed to a marked degree by the home instinct which is a characteristic of Virginians.

Then the talk broadened and diverged, and they won from Bruce some account of the

changes and events which had filled, for him, the interval of absence. Not much of individual information could they glean, for Bruce was a shy man when it came to talking of himself, but enough to show them contrasts, and to condense and vivify their nebulous conceptions of the great West and of the possibilities which it could offer. Bruce was an intelligent man, with keen and trained powers of observation, the gift of expression and a subtle, dominating sense of humor. As he talked he was conscious of an undercurrent of amusement; the pictures of his western experience, with all their virility and vastness, placed suddenly in this old world environment, appeared, to him, as incongruous as would be a horse-fair held in the nave of a cathedral.

His listeners were too simple minded, and, moreover, too enthralled by his descriptions to be affected by aught in the way of contrast. To them, their own life was fixed; following immutably the lines of precedent and environment; and with it they were content. These new views of a broader horizon,

a more extended life, brought no unrest, no yearning for emulation, even when placed in juxtaposition with the quietude which surrounded them. They hearkened to the stories with keen, but impersonal interest, such as will be given to all impressions which delight the intellect, or appeal to the imagination, but leave the emotions untouched. They liked to hear about the stir and bustle of the life beyond their quiet world, but they had no active wish to mingle with it.

When, at length, Bruce took his leave the entire family—including Mammy and old Uncle Peyton, who had happened round from the stable-yard, ostensibly on an errand, but in reality to shake hands with Mr. Bruce and assure him that he “cert’n’y had grow’d”—accompanied him to the gate. They made much of him, too, and begged him to come to see them often, and rejoiced in his determination to settle among them once more with a simple heartiness that touched the young man deeply. The life he had depicted for them had seemed interesting enough in the living, but it had not satisfied the higher,

finer part of his nature, as he was already beginning to fancy that this life might satisfy him.

"I like him," announced Bernard with decision, as they watched him ride away. "I like him exceedingly, and I'm glad he's come home to live. We must not let him get lonely, Rebie. We must have him over here often."

Bernard spoke calmly. An engaged young woman, secure in her own position, feels that she has a margin wherein to plan unlimited hospitality to unattached creatures of the opposite sex, safe from comment or emotion. Rebie's acquiescence, at first, was silent; but as they walked back to the house she suggested that they should have an impromptu gathering of the neighbors one evening during the coming week, in honor of the wanderer's return. Bernard adopted the suggestion with enthusiasm and the pair fell, animatedly, to discussing ways and means.

"That's right, little women," Colonel Kennedy observed approvingly. "Give him a good send-off, and he'll manage the rest for

himself. He'll be a popular man in the neighborhood, as his father was before him. Geoff is a cleverer man than ever his father was, I should judge, although Basil Bruce was no fool, either. I met John Kennedy, this morning, and he told me Geoff had contrived to lift that outrageous mortgage Basil left on the estate, and is forehanded in the matter of an income besides. John knows, for he's been the lad's agent during his absence. He's got pluck, that young fellow—pluck and energy. He was a good soldier, too, in the old days. I'm glad he's come home. The old state needs men of his caliber. We must get him into politics after a little."

The following day was Sunday, a balmy, exquisite May day, rich with an atmosphere of warmth and light, and with an earth vital with germinating impulses. The trees all garmented in living green held themselves proudly, as conscious of a promising start in the season's work; and the breezes kissed and encouraged them, lifting the oak leaves to show the tender russet on the under-side, and playing sweet whispering symphonies amid

the tremulous twigs of the old aspens. The season was a trifle backward, so the walnut trees still showed yellowish tassels among their foliage; but the glory of locust and lilac bloom was over. Around the porch old fashioned climbers hung—yellow jessamine, clematis, and Banksia and Multiflora roses. The place was brilliant with form and color, and the atmosphere redolent with sweetness, so that a sojourner in that favored spot might be satiated with enjoyment through all the senses.

It was a perfect day, filled with sunshine, peace, and promise; filled with pleasant sights and goodly savors. A day on which to gaze abroad over the earth and the beauty and majesty thereof, acknowledging in the soul that life is good and set in a good place, and that the spirit shall have cause to rejoice as a strong man and mightily uplift itself each time the consciousness of conception and growth and fruition shall return with the gladness of the season of love and of roses.

The nearest church was three miles away so the young ladies sometimes excused them-

selves from attendance at its services. Colonel Kennedy rarely missed going himself, unless the weather were exceptional. He had old fashioned views anent the power for righteousness which religious organizations may prove in communities, and also in regard to the responsibility resting on the elders of a neighborhood to preserve an example. Sometimes one, or both, of his daughters would accompany him, sometimes, as to-day, they would prefer to remain at home. He never forced their inclinations either way, being too sincere a follower of Christ not to have absorbed and assimilated somewhat of the tenderness and liberality of His teaching. With the colonel, as with his Divine Master, the verity counted for more than the appearance, and he held that even external acts of worship should be voluntary.

Bernard was seated at the piano in the parlor chanting a grand old anthem. Clear and sweet the words rang out, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." She had a fine voice, rich and powerful, and sacred music suited it. Bernard was more gifted in many ways

than was her sister—none more willing to admit it than Rebie herself. “Bernard is the majestic ship that glides over blue waves from far-away summer isles,” she would say, “and I’m the fiery little steam-tug that grapples her and tows her into harbor.”

Sitting at her music with the sunshine filtering through the old red curtains and bathing neck, brow, and lovely chestnut hair with rosy light she looked a St. Cecelia, and the least stretch of imagination might have sufficed to depict cherubim and seraphim hovering in rapt devotion near her. Yet Bernard, when roused, was as merry and active as Rebie herself, and no one enjoyed a dance or frolic more. Rebie was wont to declare that her sister betrayed her spirituality most by neglecting her clothes; and there was truth in the accusation, for Bernard’s things would never look like those of other people. Her clothes had a dejected, left-to-themselves aspect that would have blighted a less beautiful woman. Rebie was different and always contrived to look fresh

and trim, making the most of such good looks as she possessed.

She sat on the porch enjoying the sunshine and roses and dreamily listening to the music. Her soft spring dress was adorned with a cluster of pink Multiflora blossoms, and she had a book on her knee, into the pages of which she cast no glance. She was thinking of the element of interest which had been added to their lives by the return of Geoffrey Bruce.

There was food for day-dreams in the music and the surroundings, but Rebie's were broken into, ere well started, by the advent, from the kitchen regions, of a small, ragged negro boy with a comical countenance and a brimless hat. He was accompanied by a broad backed, bench-legged terrier with cropped ears and tail. He was the only hope (the boy, not the dog) of the Broadoaks cook, and an especial *protégé* of the young ladies.

"Miss Rebie—" he began, with a twinkle in his eyes and the broadest of grins.

“Crum,” interrupted the young lady, “how often must I remind you of the discourtesy of addressing ladies with your head covered? Remove your *chapeau* and speak out your message, without unseemly cachinations.”

The little darky clawed off his hat-crown with a chuckle. He was used to this grandiloquent mode of address from his young ladies. They called it educational, but Crummie was shrewd enough to suspect that they were, in truth, amusing themselves at his expense. He “did n’t keer,” however, and was prone to imitate them, on occasion, behind their backs, for the delectation of his own associates.

“Miss Rebie—” he recommenced.

“You said that before,” reproved Rebie. “Never make false starts, young man; it spoils the dramatic effect of oratory. As you are, doubtless, destined for the political arena or, perhaps, the church, you should be careful to acquire a pure style. Observe my caution and proceed.”

"Yes'm. Miss Rebie, ole A'nt Nancy, she say won't you, please, marm, come down to her house d'reckly. Say she dun hear de angel o' de Lawd a-callin' an' a-callin' inde watches o' de night, and she p'intly do b'l'eve she gwine hab one fit. Say mis'ry so bad in her haid an' de j'int's o' her back. An' say, if you please, marm, fetch her one little drap o' whisky in er boddle, an' some sugar an' coffee. An' if Miss Bernard got any cole meat, whar dun cook, she'd be mighty proud to hab a little mouf-full, kase she ain't got no appetite to eat nothin' whar she got."

The boy reeled off his message with glibness, lifting up his shoulders, and rolling his eyes to emphasize the various points. The old woman in question lived in a cabin on Colonel Kennedy's land, and was, in a great measure, a pensioner on his bounty. She had been his nurse, and used that fact unsparingly to her own advantage.

Bidding the boy remain where he was, to accompany her and carry the basket, Rebie passed through the house on her way to the store-room. She paused an instant

at the parlor door to inform her sister of her mission. Bernard nodded, being too well accustomed to reports of Aunt Nancy's nocturnal summons to attach much importance to repetitions of them. She simply called after Rebie information in regard to the whereabouts of the provisions required, and enjoined it upon her not to go alone.

Aunt Nancy's cabin was situated about half a mile from the house, and the path leading to it passed through woods and beside a tiny stream, called in Southern vernacular a "branch." It was a merry brooklet, and "babbled over stony ways in little sharps and trebles," snaring sunbeams and playing a soft accompaniment to the rustle of the wind amid the branches overhead. Rebie walked on briskly, enjoying the exercise and listening to the boy's gleeful whistle as he trotted behind her with the basket neatly balanced on his hat-crown. He held a stone ready in his hand for any game which might be started by the bench-legged terrier, and his bright black eyes roved hither and thither. The dog nosed about and wagged



AND PLANKED HERSELF, WITH LUSTY BARKING, IN FRONT OF A GENTLEMAN WHO WAS ADVANCING.—Page 41.

her stump of a tail with grave importance, pausing now and then to utter an excited bark and dig frantically for a second at the root of some bush or sapling, raising thereby fallacious hopes in the breast of her master.

Presently, however, she dashed along the path with a great show of activity and planted herself, with lusty barking, right in front of a gentleman who was advancing toward them from the opposite direction.

CHAPTER IV.

REBIE's brows came together, shadowing her eyes, as water is shadowed when clouds hang low and hurry before the wind. A hesitating, slightly dissatisfied expression straightened the curves of her mouth into set lines ; her step almost imperceptibly faltered, and an incipient gesture of withdrawal confessed the impulse that was in her to turn backward.

Crummie drew nearer and called to his dog with obsequious eagerness. Whatever might be the feelings of the young lady in regard to the new comer those of her escort discovered themselves to be decidedly, almost servilely, friendly.

The gentleman, his advance obstructed by the obstreperous canine, paused and looked quietly down at his assailant until the little beast, disarmed by his quiescence, gave over barking and came close, with more pacific intentions. As she planted her little front

paws against the gray-trowsered leg and lifted an inquisitive muzzle the man stooped, caught her by the back of the neck and tossed her into the bushes beside the path; whence, after a moment of surprise and uncertainty, she extricated herself, to be loaded with contumely by her time-serving owner.

The gentleman approached Rebie with words of greeting. He had removed his hat and the spring sunshine filtering through young leaves brightened the crisp waves of blond hair which rose nimbus-like from the forehead and swept from crown to nape in unparted masses. The mouth, sure index of the emotional nature, was thin-lipped and red as a woman's, parting over narrow teeth set slightly apart, and shadowed by a mustache which caught sunny reflections and meshed them like spun gold; the eyes were peculiar, large and full, but mottled in the iris like tortoise shell, or the summer plumage of the ptarmigan. A handsome man at first sight, and even on closer inspection—a tall man, well set up on firm, straight legs,

deep chested, slim waisted and lean flanked.

The hand-shake between the pair showed no lingering appreciation of the ceremony on the part of the lady. Rebie withdrew her fingers from the clasp of Mr. Stuart Redwood with unflattering promptitude. He stood in front of her, barring her path and after the exchange of greeting she made a movement sideways, leaving a space between them.

"I was on my way to Broadoaks," he explained, "on the chance of finding somebody at home. That old house over yonder," giving his head a backward gesture in the direction whence he had come, "is terribly oppressive in its Sunday silence. The loneliness gets to be a palpable substance, close and impenetrable, like thick darkness. If I were an imaginative man I could conjure up ghostly footsteps and soft rustling of silken garments every time the wind stirs. I could even people the place with spiritual presences in a dead calm. A little of it goes a long way with a practical, gregarious fellow like me, and the grim eyes of those old portraits

in the parlor always produce the desire in me to change my base in less than half an hour."

Stuart Redwood was a mining engineer of some note in his own section and among his own people. He had been sent South the previous autumn by a New York syndicate to take charge of a mining venture in the mineral belt of Piedmont, Virginia. A talented man and a gentleman, Redwood had been well received by the people of the neighborhood, and had made himself, on the whole, fairly popular. He was domiciled in bachelor importance at one of the old Kennedy homesteads, whose owner, a lawyer living two-thirds of the year in Richmond, was glad enough to let the premises, as they stood, to any responsible tenant. The place was very secluded and lonely, situated several miles from the river, in the dead backwoods, and sometimes Redwood found its solitude more than he could endure.

Until the return of Geoffrey Bruce, whose plantation lay between, the family at Broadoaks had been his nearest neighbors, and during the winter it had come to pass

that a surface intimacy had been established between the Kennedys and the new comer. That it was only surface, despite the cordiality of the Southern manner, Redwood knew full well, and, differing from his new associates in many essentials and liking them with reservations, he was quite content to be excluded from the arcana of their lives, even as he himself preserved sacred from them his own sanctuaries. In one instance only he girded at the invisible barrier, and that was where it separated him from Rebie Kennedy.

From the first moment of their acquaintance the girl had powerfully attracted Redwood. There was in her manner an aloofness and lack of spontaneity which baffled and piqued him. She was courteous, even friendly; but she made him feel that the fences were up and that he stood outside of them. She made him feel, also, that the domain enclosed was fair to look upon, and would be fairer to possess.

Redwood was a man whose combative and dominating instincts were strong. The

thing which opposed him was the thing which he would—figuratively—move heaven and earth to bend to his will. Debarred the freedom of this sweet nature, his determination solidified to obtain it at any cost.

Rebie looked at him, smiling. She had not cared to meet him, but since he was here the woman within her caused her to make herself pleasant to him. In response to his inquiry as to whither she might be bound she explained to him the nature of her errand.

“It’s a relief expedition,” she averred, “undertaken in behalf of my father’s old nurse. She is eighty-five, and rejoices in the possession of many and complex ailments. Just now her favorite complaint is *fits*, and she serves them on us at all hours of the day and night. We are expected to be terribly alarmed by the new development, and even father must quail before the peril of it, or Aunt Nancy’s feelings will be hurt. She sent word up to the house an hour ago that she felt a fit coming on, and wanted a lot of things to eat, and that Bernard or I must

come over to her cabin at once. She is a rather spoiled old woman."

"She must be," Redwood assented; then demanded, with a change of voice, "Does she live in a neat looking cabin near Mr. Bruce's line fence? Because if she does, the fit is all gammon. She's got a prayer-meeting in full blast. All the men who work at the mine are there; old Abram is exhorting from the top of a herring keg, and the women are slapping their hands together and crying 'Oh, Lordy!' like the very dickens. I came by there just now."

Rebie turned reproachfully to her sable escort.

"Why, Crummie," she remonstrated, "what made you tell me that Aunt Nancy was sick and wanted these things?"

"So she did, Miss Rebie," Crum stoutly asserted. "She took an' sont 'Liza-Jane up to de house by light dis mornin'. 'Liza took an' tole me whenst I was drivin' up de cows to milkin'. Mammy, she say I should n't tell y'all 'twell arter bre'kfus', an' I never. Den

I took 'n forgot it plumb 'twell I come an' tole you."

"It's no use my going on if they've got a prayer-meeting," Rebie deliberated. "Aunt Nancy will have to defer her fit to a more convenient season. You must carry the things on to her, Crum, and say I'm sorry she's poorly and will come over to-morrow. Don't leave the basket, whatever you do, or Mammy will murder you."

"Is that your Mammy's boy?" questioned Redwood, his eye following the retreating form of the little negro. He was not interested in his query, nor in the reply which it might evoke; but he wished to delay the homeward move and to keep her with him in the fair spring sunshine and the silence and suggestiveness of the budding woods.

"No, indeed," Rebie answered. "Mammy has no children except Bernard and me. She loves, scolds and rules *us* exactly as though we were hers in reality. Crummie belongs to our cook—a long, narrow black-snake sort of woman whom you have, probably, never seen. She never belonged to father. She

came to us when her old master died about a year after the war, and has lived with us ever since. The boy's real name is Oliver Cromwell. I gave it to him. If he should come to the White House—and you know there is no limit for colored possibilities—it will be an advantage to him to have a name full of subversive suggestions. My inspiration of ten years ago may be prophetic. Who knows?"

Redwood laughed.

"That's into me because of the colored franchise," he declared. "I don't wonder you people mind it. To use your own vernacular it is, most emphatically, putting the bottom rail on top. Your malicious forecast for your *protégé* will never be verified, however. The North would rebel more quickly, if possible, than the South from such a contingency. My residence down here, short as it is has been, has effected some modifications."

"For instance?"

Her tone was interrogative and her manner betokened interest. Redwood was delighted. To secure her attention he would

have discussed with avidity the relative results, social and political, likely to accrue from the enfranchisement of Barbary apes. She had turned for the homeward walk, and he turned with her, keeping by her side when the width of the path would permit.

“It has de-niggerized me, for one thing,” he explained. “I used to believe in the fancy sketches of the down-trodden brother like a pocket Garrison. I held him to be the sum of all the big virtues incarnated in ebony. My mind was as full of African illusions as a swamp is full of mosquitoes. All I’ve got to say *now* is, let those who think as I thought attempt to mine ore with complex machinery and negro labor and see what conclusions they will have reached by the end of six months. I wouldn’t give half a dozen white western miners for all the negroes in the South.”

“They work very well under direction; and they don’t give trouble in a tenth of the ways common to more advanced laborers,” asserted Rebie, forced to the defensive, not by the consciousness that the depreciation was

undeserved, but rather because of the tenderness in which conservative people are prone to hold accustomed things.

“They have thews and sinews,” acknowledged Redwood, “but the majority of them have no ambition and precious little brains. Give a lot of white men the advantages you Southerners are constantly allowing your former slaves, and in ten years every bit of property among you would be in a fair way to change hands. Your salvation has been that the negroes are more helpless and devoid of business enterprise and methods than you are yourselves.”

“You do us injustice.”

“No, I think not. I’m stating what looks to me a self-evident fact.”

“It’s an injustice the way you put it. You dislike Southern people and the prejudice colors your statement. Our antecedence and environment are, and always have been, totally different from yours and the same standards don’t apply. You should qualify your judgments.”

Her tone was a trifle nettled and, involuntarily, she quickened her step.

“That’s just it!” retorted Redwood, nettled in his turn. “You can’t dissociate feeling—emotion—from judgment, or even plain statement of fact. Because I said Southern negroes were stupid and unreliable, and Southern whites unbusiness like and helpless, you accuse me of injustice and prejudice. It isn’t fair! I know that you Virginians come from swashbucklering younger sons and we New Englanders from religious fanatics. These facts have been administered to the public *ad nauseam*. For myself I don’t see, in point of discretion and respectability, a pin to chose between the antecedence of the two sections. That’s beside the mark, however. What I want to defend myself from is your assertion that I dislike Southern people. I do not. I am indebted to them for much courtesy.”

“Should not a sense of your obligation hold you back from criticism?”

As the words left her lips she regretted them. To her own sense they appeared

ungenerous, and to indicate a desire to lay an embargo on freedom of speech. The man had meant no harm. His ways were not their ways—that was all. Whenever they talked together, no matter what might be the subject, she was conscious of unreasonable irritation, and of a longing to contradict and quarrel with him.

Redwood's brow contracted. He had been innocent of intent to offend, nor did he consider that his remarks had been of a nature to justify offense being taken. To his own thought, in all his talks with Rebie, he was particularly large-minded and considerate. He fancied, at times, that she was difficult with him on purpose, from coquetry, or sheer perverseness. A retort rose to his lips, but he checked it, and walked beside her silently. His eyes dilated and then contracted with some sudden emotion, and his mouth compressed itself under his tawny mustache.

Rebie glanced about seeking a topic of conversation. She felt uncomfortable, like a person who has betrayed temper for an inadequate cause. She half suspected that the

retort which she had seen quivering on her companion's lips had been withheld for the purpose of placing her at a disadvantage, and then rebuked herself for the ungenerous suspicion.

As they neared the house she noticed a couple of horses fastened to the rack outside the yard, and another, a nervous, fretful black mare with a white star in her forehead, standing apart, her rein attached to the horse-shoe nailed to the trunk of the old poplar. On the porch were seated three gentlemen smoking—her father, her uncle Edward Kennedy and Geoffrey Bruce.

Redwood's glance followed the direction of hers.

"Who is the stranger?" he abruptly questioned.

Rebie responded graciously, willing to make amends, and added to the mention of Bruce's name some eulogistic comments anent the impression he had made upon them all.

"He isn't a real stranger, you know. He belongs to our past as well as present. He was with my father and brothers in that sad

old time, and associations of every sort are woven thick around him. It is a great pleasure to have him among us again."

She spoke with animation, and a cordial sincerity of interest that jarred on the man at her side. Redwood's expression changed and his look grew hard and repellent as he neared the porch.

CHAPTER V.

WEDNESDAY of the following week, the day appointed by the young ladies of Broadoaks for the little entertainment to be given in honor of Geoffrey Bruce, dawned, and waned toward evening with much activity and merriment. The two girls flew about the house, arranging rooms for guests who must remain over night, and clearing the big old-fashioned parlor of superfluous furniture in readiness for the dancing.

“Hadn’t we better have the Kitchen brothers after all?” inquired Rebie, as the sisters repaired to the storeroom for the composition of that last, eleventh-hour cake which, to rural housekeepers, always seems essential, no matter how bountiful may have been their previous provision. “I’m afraid if we don’t all the playing will fall on you.”

“Never mind,” Bernard answered. “We can’t help ourselves. If we have one Kitchen to accompany the piano ’twill mortally

offend the other, and we can't get them both because they are at feud again. Jerry *knows* that Luke's wife turned the hogs into his garden last week because his hot-bed was 'mo' forreder' than hers. And no amount of rhetoric will convince Luke that Jerry didn't knock off old Damson's horn on purpose when he caught her ravaging his young melon vines. According to Tom Kennedy's version of the affair, each man is quoting Paul's comment on Alexander the copper-smith, and hoping that the Lord will reward the other 'according to his works.'"

'It's horrid to have them under strained conditions,' Rebie admitted, busily restoring the equilibrium of a pair of scales by piling nails on the side which would not balance. "They are no help at all when they are quarreling."

"None whatever," assented Bernard. "Sue Kennedy tried it last autumn. Tom arranged an armistice between them for that appearance only, and Sue says she never had such a wearing time in her life. They wouldn't speak to each other, except

through a medium, and during the entire evening the musician's corner was electric with flashing eye and hissing innuendo."

The men under discussion belonged to that stiff-necked, independent mountaineer class usually dubbed "poor whites." They were very good musicians,—one a violinist of merit and the other a power with the banjo,—and generally accommodating about lending, or hiring, their talents for the enjoyment of the neighborhood. By long practice they had come to play dance music with such skill and spirit that the very first bar would cause the sanctified toes of quite settled church members to beat time upon the floor; while to the heels of the unregenerate it would give wings. The only drawback to the community's joy in the possession of the men was the extreme choler of their temper and their proneness to domestic schism, during which time neither money nor persuasion would prevail to restore harmony sufficient for the practice of their art. When the Kitchens were at feud it was well understood that the young people

of the neighborhood must pipe for themselves, or forbear to dance.

Rebie broke the eggs carefully, draining off the translucent whites from the golden globule in the center and casting the latter into a great bowl of shaded blue china wherein rested a heap of sugar. As the deep tinted yolks nested themselves in the glittering white mound the girl paused, spoon in hand, to note and admire the harmony of contrast, and her mind, led and influenced by the subtle suggestiveness of color, pictured to itself clumps of field-daisies lifting golden hearts to the bend of a summer sky, and nodding responsive to the greeting of each passing breeze.

Beyond her, as she sat at the low oak table, rising from floor to ceiling, were the shelves, rich with the accumulations of years of domesticity. Piles of old blue Canton china, imported in the days when voyages to the Orient were events of magnitude, and those who went down to the sea in ships were regarded with interest and an admiration akin to wonder; cut glass, in rank and file of

bowls, dishes, and slender wine glasses whose glittering facets had reflected the soft light of wax candles at many a stately banquet in "ye olden times," and whose musical ring had been evoked to announce fellowship in pledges to the eyes of beauty, or the glory of renown. To one side the family silver stood, kept burnished by loving hands and held in high regard from the fact that each piece betokened by-gone bridal joy, or wedded love, or the coming of little children. In the corners, away up next the ceiling, were the relics, broken things, past usefulness or beauty, yet preserved from the ash heap or the hillside by the tenderness of association, and given a niche in the woman's sanctuary.

On the lower shelves the present held sway in stores of jellies, preserves and pickles, which showed amber or crimson, where the sunlight struck on the glass jars, and rich mahogany color, or mottled, like dark agate, where the shelves were in shadow. The air of the place was made faintly fragrant with odors of thyme, sage, sweet marjoram and balsam when the breeze from the open window shook

the bunches of dried herbs pendant from nails in the corners.

Rebie, in joyous mood, plunged her spoon into the eggs and sugar and vigorously stirred the whole into an aureate mass. A song bubbled from her lips in a rippling murmur, like water falling over rapids. And the tale it told was of a warrior bold who, for his lady's sake, vowed to perform some true act of chivalry "'twixt dawn of day, and twilight's sway" of all the time they should be separated, so that "deeds of gold, by minstrel told" should cause her heart to exult in the knowledge that for love's dear sake, her knight did make his devoir after so grand a fashion.

Bernard entering from the kitchen, cake mold in hand, put an end to the refrain and changed the current of the girl's mood.

"No," she answered in response to a question, "it isn't near ready yet. It's hardly begun, in fact. You must help me. There's lots of time yet. Everything is done except this."

Bernard drew the dish containing the whites of the eggs toward her and reached out to a shelf for an egg-whip.

"I had a note from Sue Kennedy just now," she said, the warm blood mounting to her cheek. "Rolfe is coming home to-day. He got leave unexpectedly, and telegraphed Tom to send a horse over to the station. Sue thinks his plan is to take us by surprise, but Aunt Mary decided that we ought to know because of the company this evening."

"That was nice of Aunt Mary," Rebie declared, approvingly. "Of course you'd rather know so that we can arrange for you to be together a few moments, at least, when he gets here. It's nearly a year since he was last at home. I'm so glad for you." She half rose and rested her cheek against her sister's with a loving gesture.

Rolfe Kennedy was Bernard's *fiancé*. He was her cousin and poor; but neither consanguinity nor lack of means had prevented the imprudent young couple from contracting an engagement. In the lonesome places emotion still takes precedence of calculations.

The evening closed in soft and warm; the sun bestowed a golden benison on the mountains and slowly withdrew himself, bearing the guerdon of light and heat to the denizens of the world beyond. The young ladies shook out and donned their dainty muslin robes, brightening them with garniture of honeysuckle and roses from the old garden.

It had been especially enjoined on Geoffrey Bruce that he must present himself in season to assist in the reception of the guests, so that twilight had scarcely settled down before his black mare was in her place beneath the old poplar. It was to be his "turning-out party," Rebie had explained. She met him with a smile and fastened into his coat a rosebud which matched those amid the laces on her own bosom. She stood beside him, awaiting the other guests, and glancing at him from time to time with such frank friendliness in her happy eyes that Bruce, all unconsciously, began to yield to a subtle enchantment, and to dimly realize, as through a golden mist, the beauty and

completeness life may hold for men and women.

The neighbors were glad to welcome him. Most of them recalled with pleasure the high-spirited, gentlemanly lad, and even had that not been the case he would still have been "Basil Bruce's boy"—one of themselves, an outcome of their past, and, as such, sure of recognition. As it was every eye smiled on him, every hand met his with cordial pressure and he was made to feel that his place had been kept for him, that he had not been forgotten. And in half an hour old associations had so far renewed themselves that, to Bruce, those years of absence, so eventful and so long in the passing, appeared to roll together like a scroll that might be banded by the thumb and forefinger.

Merrily sounded the music as Bernard's white fingers flew over the keys, and merrily moved the feet of the dancers, keeping time with its gladsome flowing. All were in blithest spirits, eyes and hearts, as well as feet, responding to the challenge of the music; bowing, changing, winding in and

out through the graceful convolutions of the pretty old cotillions.

Mr. Edward Kennedy—called “Uncle Ned” by the entire connection without regard to degrees of kinship—stood with his elbow on the mantel and called out the figures in a jovial, “tally-ho” voice, beating time with his foot and making jokes with everybody. He was not in the least like his brother, Colonel Kennedy, being a tall, robust man, rising six feet; was much addicted to field sports and had been a notable dancer in his youth.

“Well done, Geoff,” he approved, as Bruce, with Rebie on his arm, paused near him at the conclusion of a set. “Nobody would believe you had danced nothing but fandangoes for ten years. If your hand retains its cunning as well as your heels we’ll have good sport together.”

“It was the terrifying consciousness of your presence, Mr. Kennedy,” Bruce replied, gaily. “Your eye was on me and I dared not blunder. My recollection is too vivid of the day when you boxed me, head over

heels, for always giving my partner the wrong hand."

"Served you right," laughed Uncle Ned. "But for that blow you might have been years in coming to a knowledge of the difference between the right and wrong way of doing things. I'll take you fishing in a day or so, and see if you bear my other instructions in mind."

Rolfe Kennedy, who had stationed himself beside the piano, bent over and said a word to Bernard, who smiled up at him and changed the music on the rack. The soft swaying movement of a waltz filled the air with allurements and melody, and every man looked about for a partner, unwilling to lose an instant's enjoyment. Redwood advanced and claimed Rebie, and Bruce turned to Sue Kennedy.

But Sue had charitably engaged to pioneer a bashful young cousin, a scion of the numerous house of Kennedy, and loyally stood by her promise. She suggested to him to go and ask a Miss Courtnay, a gawky schoolgirl with eager eyes and a receding

chin, who was standing beside Colonel Kennedy and looking wistfully about her.

"She's a stranger here," Sue explained, "and very young and unfledged. Her people were good and kind to my sister, when her baby was ill, last summer at the Yellow Sulphur, and when Maud heard that she was coming to the neighborhood she wrote to us to look after her a little."

"Who is she staying with?" Bruce questioned.

"The Talcotts. They are new people who have moved in since you left. They only come to the country for the summer. Their home is in Richmond. That's Mary Talcott flirting with Tom over by the bookcase. She introduced that poor Courtnay girl to Uncle Julian and washed her hands of her. Please go and make yourself pleasant. She dances very well, I believe, and she looks so lonesome."

Bruce crossed the room at once, spoke to Colonel Kennedy and obtained the necessary introduction. Tom gave him a quizzical smile and slightly lifted his shoulders as

though to convey the intelligence that he knew that Bruce was under orders. The young lady's eyes, however, brightened, and such a look of genuine pleasure flashed into her unformed face that the young man felt his good nature rewarded and slipped his arm around her waist with quite a show of alacrity. She danced with the grace and vigor of one with whom the exercise is a passion, and to whom it had still the charm of novelty. As they glided around the room Bruce noticed, with amusement, the rapt absorption of her face and, for the moment, sympathized with the enthusiasm which could lose sight of self and surroundings in the harmony of music and movement.

But if to dance well is a good thing, to know when to stop is better, and Miss Courtnay, while she excelled in one, failed deplorably in the other branch of knowledge. One couple after another stopped and they went on; a few brave spirits started afresh, whirled awhile, broke down and stopped again, and still they went on. Bruce's expression gradually changed from the sym-

pathetic contentment of a good waltzer, well matched, to a look of surprise, broadening to amazement, quickly succeeded by rage, a desire to laugh, despair, and finally settled down to dogged endurance. The room stilled and every eye was fixed on the whirling pair. How would it end?

"Ten to one on the woman," Tom Kennedy murmured to his father. "She's sound in wind and limb, and has the staying power of a four-year-old thorough-bred. She told me she could break down any man alive, and, by Jove! I believe her. With a partner to her mind nothing short of an earthquake or a conflagration will stop her. Hadn't somebody better yell 'fire'? Geoff looks ready to drop."

"I don't blame him! Why don't he stop her? She'll whirl him through the ages and past the crack of doom. The girl has no mercy."

"She's good to go for an hour yet."

"An hour! Twenty years from now a gray-haired woman and a gray-haired man will be revolving still through space."

"No, no. Bruce will drop dead, soon. No mortal man can stand it."

"Unless he's trained for a Dervish. If he survives this Bruce might set up in that line of business. He could make a fifty years spin with a little more practice."

"Play faster, Bernard!"

These, and similar comments were whispered about the room. Every face was filled with amusement which was intensified by the perfect unconsciousness of the young woman who was the occasion of the mirth. She was enjoying herself to the top of her bent, and the idea of consequences was far from her. Matters were getting desperate when Bernard, in an agony of suppressed laughter, faltered, struck a false note, and broke down altogether. Bruce, feeling that he had been made ridiculous, but determined not to admit it, still less to allow the girl who had victimized him to be made uncomfortable by a realization of her foolishness, conducted his partner to a seat, possessed himself of her fan, and feigned an interest he was far from feeling in her expressions of enjoyment.

Redwood, standing beside Rebie, laughed a trifle unpleasantly.

"Your new friend evidently enjoys making himself conspicuous," he said.

Rebie glanced up at him.

"He knows how to behave to a woman," she answered. "That girl is inexperienced and just at the age to be keenly mortified by the knowledge that she had made a spectacle of herself. She'd suffer agonies of shame, altogether disproportionate to the cause, if she found out we'd been laughing, even good humoredly, at her. Geoffrey knows that and he's being nice to her to keep her from feeling badly after awhile. It's a kind thing to do."

A change darkened Redwood's face.

"He is playing his cards with consummate skill, I grant. Other men might take lessons from him with advantage—perhaps."

His tone was significant.

"What do you mean?"

The girl's manner was cold: she withdrew herself a little.

"Nothing. Only I congratulate him on having secured a champion."

“You are right. Other men *might* take lessons from him to advantage—in courtesy.”

She abruptly left him and crossed to the piano where she established herself, saying that Bernard must have a dance before supper. When Bruce, having resigned his young lady to Tom Kennedy's care, brought a chair into the corner behind the instrument she welcomed him with a smile, and was sweet and gracious, bending an attentive ear to his eager discourse.

And strangely enough, while she listened, the old song of knighthood which she had hummed to herself earlier in the day came back and crossed and re-crossed the dance music she was playing, causing her to blunder and lose her place, until Bruce, seeing that things were going wrong, slipped his own hands onto the keyboard and played for her.

CHAPTER VI.

ABOUT a mile from the river, on that portion of the Broadoaks estate which lay next the farm of Geoffrey Bruce, stood an old stone church, disused for many years, but kept in some sort of repair through the care of Colonel Kennedy. The building ante-dated the Revolution, and had been constructed of the materials at hand, without regard to fitness or rules of ecclesiastical architecture. The walls were of stones, left in the shapes to which natural formation had brought them, and roughly bedded in coarse mortar, while the beams and rafters, for floor and roof-tree, showed plainly the mark of the settlers' axe. Even the ancient pews and hideous box-pulpit spoke eloquently of primitive handiwork, and of the time when the advent of women in the up-country had necessitated the erection of a place of worship.

Encircling the church, and banded by a rugged stone wall, lay the "God's acre." It

had once been used as the parish burying-ground, for the instincts of the colonists had been for the continuance of customs brought from the mother country; but as years went on, bringing the inevitable progression, the growth of diverse religious influences and the erection of other churches, the use of the old church-yard as a place of interment had narrowed down to a few families. And when the founding of a village, some miles away, and the building of a new church, of the same denomination, and more centrally located, caused the older edifice to be abandoned, it had come to be regarded as private property, and as having reverted to the family of Kennedy.

Although within Colonel Kennedy's recollection the use of the old church had been spasmodic and confined principally, if not entirely, to the solemnization of rites of baptism, marriage, or burial in the Kennedy family, his attachment and reverence for the place was as deep as was his love for his ancestral acres, or his regard for the memory of his parents. To him the building was hallowed

by the associations and traditions which had grown to it as insensibly and as beautifully as had grown the lichens on its woodwork, or the ivy and Virginia creeper which covered its old walls. In the knowledge that the earth around it was consecrated by containing the material part of many generations of men and women whose hearts and brains, during the life of this world, had been quickened by kindred blood to that which pulsed in his own veins, lay an additional bond to a man who, like Colonel Kennedy, had been endowed with love and veneration for the past.

It had come to be a habit with the old soldier, in his rides about the plantation, to turn aside and visit the lonely spot. He would sit motionless on his horse beside the wall, letting his eyes wander wistfully over the peaceful scene, until they would come, filled with a piteous pain and loneliness, to rest at last on the mounds which covered the forms of his fair young wife and the two brave sons she had borne him. And memory would stir and conjure up pictures of what had been, and

time would pass unheeded until the good horse, grown weary of inaction, would move and stamp impatiently, as though to remind his rider that there was still comfort and cheer in this life.

Of late the old church had had another visitor—Mr. Stuart Redwood. He would come at day-dawn, or when the shadows lengthened and the setting sun showed red through the tree stems and above the laurel brakes, like a bush-fire seen from afar. He would come always from one direction, carrying something carefully in his hand, and with his head bent forward and attention concentrated, like a hound when the scent grows faint, forcing him to run warily and with his nose to the ground.

And always the man would pause at the same spot, the bit of turf outside the graveyard wall where the horse's hoofs had worn away the grass. There he would lean, looking into the enclosure with an expression of keen calculation, of speculative interest, and sometimes of impatience and anger. The place held for him neither associations nor

memories, and aroused in his breast no tenderness, no regret. He would gaze on it, observing its mounds, its stunted evergreens and straggling roses, its unswept paths and mossy old tombstones, inclined this way and that as the settling of the earth had directed, with the look in his eyes with which a man will regard an object which is hateful to him.

The place possessed a strange fascination for him, drew him as by a spell he was powerless to resist. He had risen from his bed now, an hour before sunrise, and walked over to it in the raw uncertain light of the spring dawn.

It was chill, and there was a heavy fog that was almost a fine drizzle, and in the obscurity objects assumed unreal proportions and distances grew indefinite. No wind stirred, and every bush and twig and blade of grass was beaded with moisture. From the young leaves overhead the heavy drops fell slowly, with a soft noise where rocks, or the hard, bare earth received it. Redwood parted the bushes with his hands, pressing straight forward, as the crow flies, and

regardless of the fact that his clothing absorbed moisture on every side from contact with the undergrowth. When he reached the wall of the grave-yard he stopped, leaning his shoulder against it and waiting for more light.

On every side the fog encompassed him, shutting out, for a time, the glory of the day's increase. Then it softly lifted, borne upward by surface atmospheric currents, and thinning into gauzy wreaths which rested among the tree-tops until they were dissipated by a newly awakened breeze. As the scene changed gradually from the ethereal into the actual, and the face of nature showed itself in every-day expression, plus a matutinal freshness, Redwood removed his hat, letting the chill air play on his brow, and drawing it into his lungs with a healthy man's relish.

He walked around to the gate and entered the burying-ground, passing over, and among the graves until he reached one near the center of the enclosure, a few yards from the south wall of the church. The grave had

been walled about with brick and covered with a slab of marble, white once, but now discolored by exposure to the elements, and the growth of pale grayish lichens which clung to the stone and partially effaced the lettering which set forth that this slab was to be held sacred to the memory of George Aylett Kennedy, who had departed this life in the year of grace, 1799.

It was the grave of Colonel Julian Kennedy's grandfather.

Redwood glanced about him. The ground, to one side of the grave, was slightly trampled, and the grass flattened, as though a weight had rested heavily upon it; a track, faint, but distinctly marked, led straight from where he stood to the steps of the church, on one of which rested a tiny heap of earth; the corners of the slab were discolored as though it had been grasped by hands begrimed with clay. Redwood caught up a handful of dead leaves, which had been lodged against a headstone near at hand, and rubbed away the stains. His face wore a dissatisfied expression, as of one who has



"IF MISS REBIE WAS TO MARRY THAT GENT'MAN 'TWOULD BE A MIGHTY GOOD THING!"—Page 88.

relied on nature for aid, and had his trust betrayed.

He moved the stone, lifting one end from the brick foundation and straightening it into place. Then he obliterated, as well as he was able, all traces of disturbance.

While so engaged a sound came to him, and he bent his head, listening, with every nerve tense, as the wood-pecker listens, with his bill to the bark, for the stir of the insect within.

Only the stroke of an axe away in the woods; some negro cutting firewood, most likely. Redwood's attitude relaxed. He turned and entered the church, closing the door carefully behind him.

CHAPTER VII.

FOR a week or two after the dance at Broadoaks the usually quiet neighborhood was convulsed with gaiety. An epidemic of riding and dancing parties broke out; there were expeditions to places of real, or imagined interest, and every few days the young people would meet at one or another of the houses to spend a social evening. The weather favored frolicing, being balmy, and still not warm enough to be oppressive.

Redwood, influenced by many motives, laid aside all reserve and entered into everything with a zest unusual to him. Under his quiet manner there was a strain of nervous excitement, and his sphere was vital with the impulse of sustained and eager effort. His quest of Rebie, gradually, became more pronounced so that people began to notice and put two and two together, with smiles and noddings of the head, and public interest precipitated itself into factions because of

another man who had entered the lists with avowed intent to battle for the prize.

“There are breakers ahead for somebody,” Uncle Ned would remark to his son Tom. “It’s a long time since I’ve seen one man look at another as Redwood looks at Geoff Bruce. When Bruce is with Rebie that fellow watches him with his head up and his eyes glittering, like a rattlesnake about to strike. There’s a lot of devil in Redwood, and the man who arouses it had better keep his wits well oiled and look about him uncommon sharp.”

Tom would hoot at such suggestions. According to him the blood of the North flowed coldly, producing a temperament calm and calculating and an emotional nature incapable of cyclones. And for the present situation, it was inevitable that one man or the other must surrender, and the vanquished would, of course, have sense enough to do it decently. Aside from other motives, *amour propre* would dictate an orderly withdrawal. The conception of danger was ridiculous and melodramatic. So Tom would argue, lack-

ing that deep knowledge of certain Northern traits which bitter experience, amid carnage and death, had gained for the older man.

But Uncle Ned, with larger insight, would maintain his position.

“Don’t try to appear a greater fool than God made you, Tom,” he would observe, with parental frankness. “You simply don’t know what you are talking about. Northern blood isn’t always boiling up like ours, but it holds heat longer. You’ll find that out if ever you try conclusions with the good folks north of the line as I tried ’em. That fellow Redwood has got a jaw built for holding on. He can’t part his hair, either. It grows in a brush, straight from the scalp, like the hair of an animal. I’m no physiologist, but I’ve observed a few things as I’ve gone along, and my experience shows that a man whose hair won’t part can’t be trusted. He’s apt to be tricky, or dangerous. If Rebie don’t sit light and ride carefully she’ll get herself in trouble.”

To which Tom would reply that doubtless Bruce would “cut the young cock’s comb”

for him. And there the subject would end, both men being fully aware that if Bruce should fail of performing the part assigned him it would be through no lack of effort.

So prevalent was the interest excited that it penetrated even to the kitchen where the family retainers discussed the situation in council and passed judgment on the relative merits of the two suitors. There were factions here as elsewhere, Mammy and Uncle Peyton being staunch to old traditions and the house of Bruce, while Jane—still regarded by the other two as an alien whose interest in family matters was superfluous, not to say intrusive—entertained a preference for the stranger, founded largely on the fact that one of her sons worked at the mine and was never kept waiting for his money.

“He’s mighty rich, I reckon,” she meditatively observed, one morning after she had been presented with a new dress and a wonderful bonnet purchased with money drawn from the mine.

“Who dat?”

Mammy knew perfectly; but it pleased her to affect ignorance. To do so would, in her estimation, cheapen Jane's importance in her connection with wealth and enterprise through her son's employment, and might even lessen her satisfaction in the new dress. Mammy was shelling peas and continued her work with an air of absorption, digging her thumb-nail into the fat green pods and collecting the peas in her brown palm with an affectation of indifference to all answer to her query.

“Mr. Redwood, of co'rse. My Wallis, he come home las' night to fetch me dem things whar he bought for me, an' was talkin' 'bout it. He say de boss jus' a-pourin' out de money—sinkin' another shaft, an' diggin' an' gougин' every which-er-way. Say a lot o' new machines done come an' dey's fixin' up some sort o' contrivance to keep it from gittin' rotted out so quick. Wallis say Mr. Redwood 'lows he jus' gwine snatch de gold pres'ny. Say look like to him, money ain't no mo' to de boss den so much dirt.”

"It can't be his'n, den," Mammy astutely observed. "Folks look at deir own money more'n once befo' dey git shet o' it so fas'. An' dar ain't no handier way in de world to git shet o' it den by flingin' it off de p'int o' a pick-axe. Dem dollars he draps in dat hole gwine to stay dar. Dat mine been worked befo', an' dem whar done it had to set down an' cry. De truck whar down in dat hole is so tarrifyin' to git hold of dat it's money in folks' pocket to let it alone. I been seed dat thing tried. Dese here folks gwine to quit pres'ny an' blow on dar fingers."

But Jane's mining interest was without horizon. So long as a portion of the coin emptied into that which Mammy scornfully designated as a "hole in de groun'" found lodgment in her son's pocket she was content to regard the mine and all pertaining to it with enthusiasm. Ultimate results were no concern of Jane's. She took a fresh iron from the fire, tested its heat in the usual manner, wiped it on her apron, and, in her next remark, diverged a little.

"Ef Miss Rebie was to marry dat gent'mon 'twould be a mighty good thing."

"How come 'twould?"

"He's got a sight o' money. An' he's a mighty good lookin' man."

"*Dat* ain't nothin'. Don't nobody know nothin' 'tall 'bout him, nor who his folks was, nor whether he ever had any. Miss Rebie's folks been quality ever sence Virginny was a settlement. Mos' any 'scription of people kin have money. Befo' de war a heap o' nigger-traders had abundance o' money; but dat didn't make 'em nothin' 'cept nigger-traders."

Mammy's tone was aggressive. She was putting her finger on a sore spot, and she knew it. Jane's former owner had amassed a considerable fortune in the inter-state slave trade, and had been a prey to fruitless social aspirations. Jane's freedom was not of sufficiently long standing to dissociate, even in her own mind, her past from her present. She winced under the reflected discredit and cast about for something unpleasant wherewith to prick her enemy in turn.

“Thar ain’t no surety thet ary one o’ dem young gent’men come arter Miss Rebie,” she remarked, knowing Mammy’s weakness for her youngest nursling. “Miss Bernard heap de prettiest.”

“Dey ain’t arter *her*,” Mammy responded, with the placidity of full enlightenment. “You dunno nothin’ ’bout it. Miss Bernard gwi’ marry her cousin, Rolfe Kennedy. Everybody knows dat! Dey been sweet-hearts ever sence dey was knee high to a hopper-grass.”

Crummie, who had come in with a basket of new potatoes, cut into the conversation. He had a gift for narration and delighted in its exercise.

“I know somethin’,” he announced. “Mr. Bruce, he thinks a sight o’ Miss Rebie, he do. Dis how come I know.” He settled himself on the wood-box and crossed one bare foot over the other. “Dat evenin’ las’ week when Un’k Peyton took’n sont me over to Mars Ned’s arter de brier-blade I kyared ole Boler wid me bekase de tarrier was ’bleeged to stay home wid her puppies. Well, whenst

we was comin' back an' had struck dat little stretch o' woods jus' dis side of de big gate I seed Miss Rebie an' Mr. Bruce come ridin' 'long de road, sorter slow. Dey didn't see me bekase I was behint de bushes. An' de horses was walkin' same as a fune'al."

He paused to throw some chips on the fire in obedience to a sign from his mother, and then proceeded with his story.

"Whenst dey got right against us ole Boler, he jumped up a rabbit side de road an' took out arter her. Ole rabbit, she turned, an' I run to head her a-hollerin' to Boler an' sickin' him on. Den dat fool colt Miss Rebie was ridin' got skeered at de fuss an' r'ared an' pitched an' started to run away. Mr. Bruce all but dashed hissef off'n his own horse grabbin' de colt's bridle. Dem horses jus' hippity-hopped 'bout in de road, I tell you, an' Mr. Bruce, he hilt on to bof of 'em same as a jar-fly to a Juny-bug. His face was white as dem clo'se on de ironin' boa'd, an' his eyes glimmered like a lightwood knot a-fire; but he talk to de colt jus' as easy. Miss Rebie wa'rn't skeered none, hardly, an'

in a minute she say 'I can manage him,' an' guthered up de bridle. Den Mr. Bruce whirled roun' on me, he did, an jus' 'bused me! He 'lowed he'd a good mind to beat me half to death. Den Miss Rebie put in an' sed he shouldn't totch me. Say she knowed I never went to skeer de horses—did I? An' I 'spond back inco'se I never, kase I wouldn't hu't her for nothin'; an' how 'twa'n't me nohow, 'twas dat ole rabbit. Den Mr. Bruce say, mighty severe, dat if Miss Rebie had got hu't he'd er *broke my nake*. He would, too. I seed it in his eye."

Crum had been allowed to tell his story without interruption, but at its conclusion Mammy subjected him to considerable verbal ill-treatment, affirming that if Mr. Bruce had "wore him out agin de groun'" it would have been no more than he deserved for "jumpin' up rabbits under dat skittish colt's nose when one de chil'un was 'pon top of him." Even Jane was moved to remonstrance which took the shape of a severe cuff on the side of Crum's wooly head, and the

order to go straight to the wood-pile and cut a turn of wood for the dinner fire.

Feeling misunderstood and unappreciated Crummie withdrew, pausing, however, on the doorstep to mutter in an undertone, but quite audibly, that he "wa'rn't *never* gwine tell 'em nothin' no more. Not 'bout de ha'rnt whar Jerry Kitchen seed t'other night risin' up out'n Mars Julian's gran'daddy's grave, nor *nothin'*."

Having launched which shaft he proceeded to the wood-pile where he further soothed his outraged feelings by a series of hoots and howls, to the accompaniment of his axe, and persevered in the same until Colonel Kennedy opened the library window and sharply ordered him to "stop that infernal noise."

CHAPTER VIII.

REBIE'S position in regard to the two men, as yet, defied analysis. The weeks, as they passed, were filled for her with an undercurrent of excitement. Subtly, insidiously, emotional forces were at work, effecting changes in her life, almost imperceptible at first, but growing in significance and promising to subvert, at no distant day, the existing order of things. It was as though imprisoned water, permeating the soil deep down below the surface, in obedience to its laws of being, should slowly concentrate and work upward and outward, seeking the appointed place wherefrom to break into the light and sunshine.

During the days passed in intimate association with one or other of the two men her feelings toward them underwent many changes, and finally came to be a puzzle to herself. The long rides, the moonlight promenades, between dances, the numberless

conditions conducive to furtherance of acquaintance afforded by the cordial intercourse of country life had given Rebie exceptional opportunities for insight and comparison.

To Geoffrey Bruce her friendship had gone out at once, and fuller knowledge of his character only deepened and amplified her liking for him. As yet it was only liking; but of a sort so satisfactory that Rebie was content to entertain it without undue inquiry as to whether it might be simply a friendly visitant or in truth the angel who would bring blessing to her household. The manliness, the honest strength and thoroughness of his nature, filled her with the same content and confidence which the steadfastness and truth of her native hills inspired. On him weak things might lean in the surety that he would never fail them; to him strong things would turn, as the eagle to the rock whereon is built the eyrie. Within the circle of his sphere Rebie, unconsciously, felt the attraction generated by a conjunction of noble forces; but had she been called upon to define her feelings

it is probable she would simply have said that he "rested" her.

With Redwood the reverse of the picture would be in accordance with the facts. If Bruce rested her, Redwood's influence aroused doubts, fears, longings for she knew not what; filled her with disquietude, and with aspirations which were more intellectual than emotional. His society had for her a malign fascination such as Indian hemp is said to possess for its votaries. Her nature protested against his nature, and her points of view were almost always opposed to his. He could not assume the simplest, most matter-of-fact position without arousing within her a desire to contravert the truth of his statements, even though they should bear truth on the face of them. In some occult way she seemed to feel that there was within him a force which could consume without warning. In some moods she hated him, and well-nigh exulted in the consciousness that it was so; in other moods she was sensible of a weird attraction, like that which, with certain imaginations, may be

developed through prolonged contemplation of a burned and blackened forest under a somber sky.

The attraction and repulsion being so nearly equal, Rebie would in all probability, have held to her own orbit uninfluenced by Redwood's proximity had not the return of Geoffrey Bruce deranged the established order and brought about new relations.

Tom Kennedy—a great promoter of expeditions, anything that involved being out of doors and on horseback finding favor in his eyes—one day suggested that, while the weather was propitious, they should make a party to visit "Old Sachem," a mountain some ten miles distant, from which the prospect was said to be unusually fine.

"You've never been there, Redwood, and you shouldn't leave Virginia without seeing that view. It is claimed that, with the atmosphere in the right state, the range of vision extends over nine counties. Since the war, the country has grown up tremendously, and the plantations appear to have shrunk to islands in a vast sea of foliage; but

the effect is very beautiful, taken from the artistic standpoint. The leaves are still young enough, moreover, to give variety, and contrast with the somberness of the pines and the shading of the open lands. On a clear day one gets the deep azure and the purple of the Blue Ridge, piled, range on range, in the distance, and the sheen of the rivers—three of them—bending in loops and curves, like silver ribbons on a green garment.”

Tom paused for breath, and Bruce softly applauded.

“Hold on!” Tom said. “I haven’t done yet. I was only waiting for my second wind. There’s more to tell. It is vouched for a fact that with the eye of faith, a lively imagination, and a good glass, one may see Charlottesville and distinguish the university and Monticello, which give an opportunity for reminiscent thrills about the constitution and old Jefferson, and for thanking God that one has a cut-throat mortgage on patriotism and the fellows who taught it. Now, if you don’t all yearn to go with an exceeding great

yearning, the 'lyre has been struck in vain.'"

"That's just it," Rebie saucily demurred. "You are such a mendacious fellow, Tom, and such a perfect jack-my-lantern for leading the unwary into swamps, that one can't help distrusting you. I've been tempted to my undoing so often by your specious representations that, if outside testimony had not established the truth of your account I'd caution the others against following your lead."

"You went once yourself," Tom gleefully suggested.

"I did."

There was an uncompromising dryness about the assent.

Bruce smiled. "Your tone suggests the inference that disappointment of some sort was your portion. What was the trouble? Didn't the view pan out well?"

"I'm not in a position to state, for I didn't see it," replied Rebie, while Tom laughed. "Some years ago Bernard, Sue and I were insane enough to arrange an expedition to Old Sachem with Rolfe, a friend from

Baltimore who was visiting us, and this abominable Tom. It was cloudy when we started, and father advised us against going; but we were wild for the ride and Tom vowed it wasn't going to rain. When we reached the foot of the mountain it was drizzling a little, and we wanted to stop at a cabin close by and wait until the shower passed; but those perjured men insisted that it would clear, or if it should n't that the best plan would be to ride on and get above the cloud. Like foolish sheep we followed our leader and the more we kept on the worse it became. The horses slipped and stumbled, the clouds grew heavier and enfolded us like a drenched blanket. We had been promised that we should get above them but we never did. They were piled in layers and when we got through one we rode into another even denser. When we reached the summit we found them in possession, mustered thick, and held in ranks by a wind that whistled like rifle bullets and cut like sabres; and presently it began to rain in a perfect deluge. Not one blessed thing could we see except the

torrent that dashed in our faces and soaked our garments. We turned and rode home without a word, and for months after the very thought of Old Sachem was enough to set us sneezing."

The dismal picture provoked a laugh, but, in spite of it, the expedition was voted for and arranged for the following Thursday. Bruce turned to ask Rebie to go with him, and was in time to catch Redwood's murmur and her reply. His disappointment was so manifest that Tom indulged in a mischievous chuckle.

"It was a case of 'Jack be nimble, Jack be quick!' and Redwood beat you," quoth he. "No, it's no use asking Bernard. Rolfe will insult you if you so much as think of her. Sue's your best chance."

On the appointed morning when the party assembled at Broadoaks it was found that it had dwindled to eight persons,—four couples,—which Tom asserted was a comfortable number and far better than a mob. He was escorting a Miss Seldon, a shy, graceful woman with a refined face and gentle man-

ner, whose society, in the eternal fitness of things, noisy, rollicking Tom particularly affected. It was rumored that he intended offering his honest heart and big brown hand for the young lady's acceptance, and that might have been his ulterior motive in proposing the expedition, since a long, woodland ride gives marvelous opportunity.

The ride would be lengthy so it had been arranged that they should spend the day on the mountain; and, as no man would endure the thought of carrying a basket, Crummie was added to the cavalcade as luncheon bearer. The way was not specially attractive, the road leading, for the most part, through dense woods, but it was shady and pleasant, and the party, kept well together by feminine strategy, chatted and laughed as they galloped along. At the wayside spring there was the usual difficulty about a gourd, so they made no halt, the women spurning Tom's obliging offer of his hands, or his hat, for a drinking cup.

The ascent was long and steep, a mere bridle-path which zig-zagged roughly up the

mountain, thickly set on either hand with bushes and made rugged by juts and spurs of rock, over and around which the horses carefully picked their way. Every now and again, as they steadily ascended, vistas of surpassing loveliness would present themselves, wooing them to linger. But Tom would permit no tarrying by the way; they must save themselves for the burst which awaited them at the summit.

And so they gaily rode onward and upward until at length, on the crest of the mountain, they emerged in a clearing of about an acre in the center of which stood the remains of a signal station, abandoned some years previously and allowed to fall into ruins. Around the clearing, hemming it in, stood a dense circle of trees and undergrowth, with here and there an opening. Everyone glanced eagerly about; disappointment settled darkly down on the faces of the women, while smiles of amusement furtively flitted across those of the men.

Sue turned on her brother with indignation.

"Tom Kennedy!" she exclaimed, "I do believe you are the most unprincipled trickster the century has produced! Here we deluded wretches have followed you miles and miles, over ravines and up mountainsides, risking our immortal souls and perishable bodies—*for what?* To be landed in the middle of a forest to look at a view! For all we are likely to see we might be at the bottom of a well. You ought to be court-martialed and shot!"

Rebie burst into irrepressible laughter.

"Didn't I warn you against trusting Tom?" she queried.

"Where is the view?" inquired Redwood, glancing around with a painstaking air. "I don't see any."

"Nor do we," observed Bernard drily, while Rolfe and Bruce regarded each other with preternatural gravity for a second and then joined Tom in a shout of laughter.

"Don't be cross, girls," he entreated. "We might have brought axes to fell the timber, but I didn't think of it. It's not so bad as it looks. Brace up a bit, and come with me."

They followed him to the other side of the clearing where an opening among the trees gave them a superb vista. Then, dismounting, they suffered themselves to be lifted and dragged up to the small platform near the top of the old station and stood there, awed and speechless, filled with the delight of the eyes. And with the majesty of that matchless panorama of mountains and valleys, wooded hills and flowing waters impressing itself upon heart and brain there came to them "as through a glass, darkly," a realization of the significance of it, of the vastness of space, of the wonder of silence and of the infinite perfection of the divine thought which finds expression in the beauty of the visible universe. Silently they stood, until Bernard, moved by the unseen influences, lifted her exquisite voice and chanted for them a psalm of praise and recognition. And, away in the southwest, like incense from an unseen altar, a cloud of smoke arose and hung in pale gray waves above the forest.

After luncheon, the party assembled on a little knoll in front of the most extensive

opening, the girls making themselves comfortable on a carpet formed of saddle-blankets, while the men reposed on mother-earth and smoked, and talked in broken snatches, with long intervals given to contemplation of the picture spread out before them and to enjoyment of *dolce far niente*.

Suddenly a cloud, adrift on atmospheric currents, was borne upward like a wave and intercepted the sun's rays so that, for an instant, the earth lay in shadow.

"It is like the wing of death hovering over the land and chilling its life and beauty," May Seldon fancifully observed.

The cloud passed, and the landscape grew from obscurity into light; more beautiful from contrast.

"Behold the resurrection," murmured Bernard, "for after darkness comes the light, after death, life, and so is the endless rhythm carried forward. Why is it that scenes like this invariably suggest music? It is as though the expectant soul were strained to catch the echo of divine harmony filling the vibrant spaces on the hither side of silence.

To follow its pulsations, now full, now faint, like the tide of human life, yet ever preserving its unity, solemn and sacred through all, stirred with tender minor cadences, lowered or uplifted by grief or passion, and moving surely onward to the outburst at the end."

"There is music in all things, if men had ears," May quoted. "And in saying that Byron but puts into words once more the thought that underlies the centuries. Every thinker recognizes that the intangible is as potent as the actual. That harmony must stir the soul and sound in the spiritual ears before it can be given material expression. It is but a repetition of the incarnation, the divine omnipotence."

"At last a soft and solemn breathing sound,
Rose like a stream of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air; that even silence
Was took ere she was 'ware, and wished she
might—

Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still, to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of death—"

quoted Rolfe. "It was fanciful of old Milton, was it not? That idea of music creating a soul—fanciful, but exquisite. How all beautiful things link themselves together in mysterious sequence; a grand view, a strain of music, the lines of a poem, a soul. It is always so. More differentiation of the old theme, I suppose." He turned his face toward Bernard and smiled.

And so the talk drifted, impersonal, oftentimes intangible, dealing with the facts and theories of thought and emotion with the subtle grace, the surface brilliancy which is a characteristic of the age. Yet showing through all, as the sun shows through iridescent mist, an innate reverence for, and sympathetic appreciation of the ideal, the spiritual which in every manifestation of life transcends and permeates the material.

Redwood leaned on his elbow and listened, taking no part in the conversation, but drawing his own conclusions. Of late he had come to take stock of the Kennedys with critical acumen; to test their thoughts, their emotional tendencies, and to speculate as to

the motives likely to influence their actions. To his more practical intelligence and larger material perceptions they seemed like a survival. He was constantly running up against barriers with them, limitations, ignorances, traditions erected into immutable laws, and dispositions to allow emotion rather than reason to have the casting vote. Had he been called upon to sum up the Kennedy family, from personal observation, he would unhesitatingly have pronounced them "a colony to themselves, with more brains and less practical use of them than any set of people likely to be met with, even in the South."

As it happened, the characteristics of the Kennedys were destined to effect Redwood's own life in many ways, a fact of which he was daily becoming more convinced. Association with them had quickened his nature and aroused within him conflicting emotions, admiration, interest, intolerance, and, latterly, had developed a desire to draw near to them, counter-balanced by an equally strong desire to brush them out of his path.

The desultory talk around him entered his ears, but penetrated no further than the bar-bican of his mind, the citadel of which was held by thoughts more deeply personal. His brow contracted and his eyes appeared to darken and lose their tortoise shell mottling as the pupil dilated. His attitude bespoke such absolute quiescence that Tom reached over and gave him a good-humored shove, bidding him at the same time, to "whistle his wits to heel."

Redwood roused himself at once, and put some question relative to the country thereabouts which led to a discussion, among the men, of soils and strata and formations, and finally of mineral deposits. Redwood grew alert, caught the reins of the conversation and headed it westward, for Bruce's experience among the mines of Nevada gave his opinions weight and value. His own information on matters connected with ores, and particularly with gold, appeared extensive, and he entered into the subject with a zest which betokened interest quickened by personal motive and desire.

"Have you ever been out to my place?" he inquired, when he had satisfied his thirst for information about the West.

"What, the old 'Lone Jack' mine? Oh, yes; a hundred times. It belonged to my grandfather, once. All that tract of land did. He inherited it from his mother, who was a Kennedy. He lost it at draw-poker. The lawyers about the court house in those days were a convivial set, and loved a mint-julep and a game of cards better than was good for most of them. There are men who can play poker, and men who think they can play poker. My grandfather was one of the last named. There's a big difference. There was a fellow named Rokesby on the circuit, then, who had been born and bred to the game, and he pretty well cleaned out the whole crowd."

"On the square, though," observed Tom.

"Certainly. The man was a gentleman. Only he always kept sober enough to know what he was about, and the others were frequently only sober enough to be responsible for what they bet. Rokesby bluffed on

a 'lone Jack' hand one night and won three hundred acres of land and half a dozen negroes from old Geoff Bruce."

Redwood looked interested. "I don't understand the game," he said. "Is a 'lone Jack' hand a strong one?"

Bruce laughed. "Lord bless you no! It beats *nothing*, and that is all. My grandfather was bluffing, too, but he hadn't the nerve to hold out. That's where Rokesby showed science; he studied men as well as cards. And he knew most of the men he played with down to the ground."

"Was it known that there were indications of gold on that tract before the land changed hands?" Redwood questioned.

"I fancy so. The negroes and poor whites panned gold and sold it long before old Geoff Bruce's time. It has always been known that there was gold in this region, but nobody ever believed it to be in paying quantity, and it has never been proved to be. That mine was not opened until years after Rokesby won it, and it had changed hands once or twice in the interim. People didn't

think much about mines in those days; the idea of wealth was associated with land and negroes. The first company that took the mine called it 'Lone Jack,' for luck. But it never brought any. All ventures connected with it have resulted in loss and failure. If your company makes a hit there it will be the first."

Redwood felt nettled. Ever since he had assumed charge of the mine gloomy prognostications had confronted him. That he would "come out of the little end of the horn" had been freely predicted, and any temporary encouragement in the out-look was scouted as being *ignis-fatuus* hovering over a quagmire. Most of the gentlemen of the neighborhood had, at one time or another, fooled away money in the mine themselves, or their fathers had, so that it had acquired a bad name among them, and everything connected with it had come to be regarded with the reminiscent suspicion of those whose digits have suffered. For every dollar raised from that hole, five had to be expended, they said. Redwood, whose

intolerant and vigorous nature refused to be trammelled by precedent, felt the general attitude and resented it. The fact of a thing having existed in one shape in the past did not, to his thinking, establish a reason for its continuing to exist in the same shape in the future. If the mine had heretofore failed, he argued, there were nine chances to one that the failure had been due to mismanagement. He believed in the mine and thought he had grounds for belief, despite the popular verdict. His combativeness was aroused and he threw up his head and clinched the bit, determined to win the race or die in the effort.

Like most strong-willed, dominating men Redwood could rarely make allowance. He could see that which he wanted and not much to the right or left of it; and his impulse was always to trample down opposition. Difference from his point of view, argued, with him, natural incapacity, or wilful misconception.

He had no intention of wasting time and energy in defense of the mine's prospects; he

meant to annihilate public prejudice with the mine's success. When he spoke again he shifted ground a little.

"There's a thing that strikes me as curious about you Virginians," he said, "and that is the latitude you allow yourselves in the matter of values. If a man wants to straighten out his lines he gets on his horse and rides around to his neighbors and proposes to 'swop' enough land to effect his purpose. He puts what you call a 'horseback valuation' on the soil without much reference to what may be on it, and none at all to what may be under it, or to the rights of heirs. And the transaction is accepted and allowed to stand through generations without any legal form of transfer. At least such appears to have been the custom formerly. Is it so still?"

There was a general dissent, and Rolfe explained that, since the war, much trouble and litigation had grown out of the old laxity, and that with the new generation, business methods in the South were slowly being reconstructed. A man's word had ceased to be

accepted as his bond; children were beginning to hold themselves exempt from obligations incurred by their fathers, and a tendency was developing to resolve things to the individual basis. For himself, he considered the—so-called—progress, decided retrogression, and a thing to be regretted.

“There was some transfer of the sort Redwood describes between the Bruces and Kennedys in the old days, wasn’t there, Geoff?” Tom questioned.

“Yes,” replied Geoffrey. “That land the old church stands on was Bruce property once. We ran down in a wedge just there, right into the Kennedy estate, and there was some trading about to straighten out lines. It was a good while ago.”

Redwood turned, as though moved by a sudden impulse, but on second thoughts settled back in his place and let the subject lapse. He had found out that which he wished to know.

A shuffling and snapping of twigs down among the bushes, accompanied by a sound as of someone belaboring the earth, attracted

general attention. The men all sprang to their feet and hurried to the spot to find Crummie, much excited, hopping around in a circle and beating some object on the ground with a hickory sapling.

"It one ole rattlesnake!" the boy explained. "I seed him curled up here, sunnin' hese'f, an' I got me one pole an' kilt him. He mighty dead ole varmint now!"

Tom caught up a stick and lifted the snake, calling to the girls to come and look at it. It was a large one, as thick in the body as a child's wrist and handsomely marked; there were eleven rattles, besides the button, and it hung long and limp across the stick, the dark blood torpidly oozing from its crushed head.

The young ladies wondered, shuddered and exclaimed, as is customary on snake occasions, and straightway developed such a tendency to start and peer askance at every dead stick, and to change their position at every rustling among the leaves that Rolfe declared there was no comfort in being near them, and suggested that the horses

should be saddled for the homeward ride, a move which was carried by acclamation.

The order of progression was somewhat different from that of the morning. Tom and Rolfe contrived to separate the young women under their escort from the rest of the party and so secure opportunity for uninterrupted conversation. While, in spite of Redwood's best endeavor, Rebie managed, without seeming intention, to keep within ear-shot of the other couple the entire way. And Redwood, baffled and provoked, had an inner conviction that Sue Kennedy, by occult, or rather feminine divination, comprehended the situation and quietly played into her cousin's hand.

CHAPTER IX.

THE morning after the expedition to Old Sachem, Mammy came into the room where the family sat at breakfast with the air of importance, vivified by dismal enjoyment, with which colored people love best to impart evil intelligence.

“Mars Julian,” she announced, “’Liza-Jane in de kitchen, sar. She come up to tell you ole A’nt Nancy pow’ful bad off. Dey’s ’feared she’s dyin’. She was taken speechless ’bout day-break, an’ ain’t made n’ary motion sence, ’cept whenst dey axed her mus’ dey fetch you an’ Mars Ned she opened her eyes an’ looked to’ards de door. Dey know’d den she was sensible, ef she could n’t talk. Patrick gone arter Mars Ned now.”

Colonel Kennedy pushed away his plate and bent over for the crutches which lay on the floor beside his chair. The news did not surprise him, for his old nurse had been failing for many months. He was only con-

scious of the regret which comes with all threatened severing of links with the past.

"Is any one with her?" he questioned. "Besides the grandchildren, I mean. And has anyone had sense enough to go for the doctor? Where's that girl?"

"She's in de kitchen, sar—'cepten she's gone home. She was pow'ful frustrated. De neighbors was comin' in tol'able thick, 'Liza say, considerin' de news ain't fa'rly had time to cirkerlate. I'se gwine down myse'f soon as de brek'fus' things is put away. No, sar, dey ain't sont for no doctor. Niggers off to deirselves don't projeck 'long o' doctors much. 'Twouldn't er done no good nohow. A'nt Nancy was *struck for death* las' night. 'Liza say dey could tell it time it come."

She spoke with the absolute conviction of ignorance and credulity. Colonel Kennedy made no comment. He was too accustomed to the fatuousness of negroes even to be made impatient by it. That they might be accounted rational beings capable of taking care of themselves in sickness or death never occurred to him. His experience had proved

them very much the reverse. To his daughters he gave a few directions and then quitted the room to despatch a messenger for a physician, and to order his horse.

“Wasn’t this last attack rather sudden, Mammy?” Bernard inquired. “We were over there a few days ago and Aunt Nancy seemed as well as usual. We made quite a visit, and she insisted on baking each of us a little ash-cake as she used to do when we were children. She wouldn’t let ’Liza or little Nancy wait on us at all—wanted to do everything herself. She talked a good deal of our grandmother, and of mother and the boys. Her mind seemed to be running on the past, and she told us stories of her own young days, and of poor old Uncle Nat.”

“Lord, honey! Un’k Nat been dead forty ye’r! I warn’t no more’n a gal whenst Un’k Nat got drowned. ’T warn’t no use makin’ ’miration over *him*. A’nt Nancy done had another husband an’ raised a houseful o’ chil’en sence his time. ’T was bein’ close by her own eend, I reckon, fetched Un’k Nat to her mind—sorter doublin’ roun’ on her own

tracks. Po' ole 'ooman! She's been breakin' up mightily all de ye'r, an' signs ain't been wantin' o' de comin' o' de eend, ef folks had had sense enuf to read 'em. Her bein' so per-tickler 'bout you-all breakin' bread in her house fur de las' time; an her dwellin' so cornstant 'pon dem whar's gone befo'. All dem is signs. Look-like de rushin' o' de river was already in her y'ears."

Bernard smiled. "She always wanted to cook things for us when we went to see her. I don't think she could ever realize that we were no longer children. And she often talked of my grandmother—her 'dear ole Mis', she called her."

The girl's tone was gentle and a trifle sad. The breaking up of associations was always painful to Bernard. Both sisters inherited the conservative spirit peculiar to their race and section in a very marked degree.

"She did not talk of them in such a near, almost intimate way, generally, Bernard," Rebie observed. "I noticed it 'specially. It was as though she could see them—as though the veil of the material had worn

so thin that sight might penetrate to the beyond."

Mammy turned, as she was leaving the room, and paused with her hand on the door.

"Folks say when death is in de a'r de chill kin be felt a long way," she ventured. "An' folks say dat when dars gwine to be another buryin' *de graveyard stirs*."

She speculatively regarded her nurslings, her dark face grave with superstitious intentness. Rebie slightly shuddered, although she was not listening to the old saying for the first time.

"When de grave-diggers went in, arter ole Mis' died, dey foun' de space laid off an' de fust clod turned," Mammy proceeded. "Hadn't n'ary livin' creeter been nigh de place, but dar 't was, laid off right 'long side o' ole Mars'r, whar de grave was bound to be. 'Twas de same thing when your ma died, long time befo' dat. 'Twarn't n'ary round p'inted shovel 'pon de plantation, bekase we-all never used dat sort, an when Brer Peyton went in de graveyard over yon-

der, wid de y'uther men to dig your ma's grave, dar 'twas all laid off an' de clod turned wid what look to be one round p'inted shovel. An' when de boys got kilt de groun' was stirred bof' times, an' right dar whar 'twas moved we buried 'em. Arter Mars Julian got crippled, one day, when he was pow'ful low an' look like every bref would be de las', I slipped on my bonnet an' stepped over to de graveyard bekase I know'd if death was nigh de sign would be mighty apt to be dar. I never said nothin' to ole Mis' 'bout it; but I went myse'f. De groun' was jus' as solid an' even everywhar as it could be, an' all round your ma's grave de grass was growin' pretty. Den I know'd de danger was gwi' pass, an' I come home satisfied, an' we-all buckled in an' worked on Mars Julian an' pulled him through. An' all de time I kep' on tellin' ole Mis' death warn't nigh bekase 'twarn't no sign. An' ole Mis' wouldn't let on she sot store by it; but it holped her mightily."

The girls glanced at each other, but made no remark. They knew the futility of all

endeavor to combat or enlighten the negroes' superstition. It was "bred in the bone," as it were. Bernard had been old enough to listen understandingly to the talk among the people at the time of her grandmother's death; and, after the lapse of years, Mammy's account seemed to her substantially the same. That the surface of the soil, even in graveyards, might be stirred without sinister portent, she knew full well, and was convinced that the ill-omened disturbance had been due in every instance to natural causes. The seeming coincidences might be accounted for readily enough. In the country burying-grounds are not subject to frequent investigation; indeed, they are rarely entered save for a specific purpose; therefore, anything unusual in their appearance would more certainly attract attention just previous to an interment than at any other time. Once Bernard had undertaken to explain all this to Mammy, but, after fifteen minutes' discourse and demonstration, had discovered that she was talking to closed ears and a sealed intelligence.

Mammy's confession of faith demanded signs and portents, and for them she would, figuratively, have suffered at the stake.

From the path leading directly to Aunt Nancy's cabin another path diverged and led by a slight detour past the old church and graveyard; this latter, but little used, formed the arc of a bow, the string of which was represented by the more frequented track. When, half an hour later, the two girls, accompanied by Mammy, reached the place where the path forked they turned, as by common impulse, into the longer way. What they expected to find in the graveyard, or whether they expected to find anything, is an open question, but, all the same, they went some hundreds of yards out of their way to satisfy themselves.

The morning was still young, and on the grass and the white clover dew drops rested. Beds of wood violets, their time of blossom past, nestled close beside the old stone wall, while clumps of Indian pinks showed bravely carmine, in contrast to the white of the blackberry vines and the delicate shading of

the eglantine. Against the church walls, covering the roughness and smoothing the primitive outline, hung the beautiful, dark-leaved ivy of old England, enfolding it, as the grace of a cultured woman will seek to enfold and temper the ruggedness of her warrior spouse.

In a tree beside the gate a pair of mockingbirds trilled, tunefully, over domestic joys, while under the church eaves and in the embrasures of its windows a settlement of mud swallows sat in their doorways and gossiped of their neighbors and, perhaps, indulged in criticism of a pair of ground sparrows who were at work behind the tombstone of the old British surgeon.

It looked very tranquil, the girls thought, as they entered the enclosure, and they trod softly and spoke in hushed tones with the instinctive respect true natures always feel in a place where humanity mingles with the earth. They quietly passed to the graves of those who, in life, had been nearest to them, and Rebie stooped and laid a bunch of wild

flowers on the stone which bore her mother's name.

In a moment Mammy, who was at a little distance, called to them and, when they had joined her, directed their attention to sundry cuts and markings in the turf as though the edge of the spade had been thrust down in many places. Near a low mound quite a large square of turf had been removed and then replaced. It was on the side of the mound furthest from the graves of the Broadoaks people, and in a line with that of Colonel Kennedy's grandfather. The cutting had been carefully done and, at a short distance would have been imperceptible to eyes not searching for signs of disturbance. Mammy knelt down and raised the piece of turf, slipping her hands carefully under it and placing it, with the earthy side uppermost, against the grave beside her. Her eyes had a brooding look, and her whole aspect was that of one who assists at some mysterious rite. The ignorant mind was impressed, and beheld in the evidence before it proof of supernatural interference; the cultured intelligence,

on the other hand, set to work at once seeking rational explanation, and endeavoring to adjust the occurrence to a place within experience.

"Some man has been digging here," Rebie said, decidedly. "See, the earth has been loosened." She thrust the toe of her boot in the bare spot and slightly stirred the soil. "I wonder who did it—and for what?"

"It looks like somebody had commenced to dig a hole for a rose bush, or young tree, and then changed his mind," Bernard suggested. "I wonder if father has been having work done here lately." She glanced about for evidences, but could find none.

Mammy rose to her feet and pointed downward. "No; 'tain't nobody been workin' here," she said. "No *human* folks, dat is. Mars Julian been busy 'pon de plantation an' 'tain't nobody comin' here to dig in de white-folk's graveyard 'dout he tell 'em. Nigger don't love to fool 'long o' graveyards, nohow. 'Tain't no use talkin'! Dat 'ar is de *sign*." Her tone was resentful, and she slightly turned and indicated the mound at



WITH A SMILE AT HER OWN FOOLISHNESS, SHE CLICKED THE LATCH OF THE GATE SHARPLY AND HURRIED AFTER HER COMPANIONS.—Page 130.

hand. "Dat 'ar is Un'k Nat's grave. Ole Mars'r sot sto' by dat nigger more'n common, an' arter he got drowneded savin' all dem folks in de big freshet, ole Mars'r had him buried right in here, long o' de fam'ly—say Nat mus' lay close by whar he gwine res' hisse'f. An' ole Mis' allus 'lowed Nancy got to be put here too—bein' as Nancy had raised all her chil'en fur her. Dat how come de sign set *here*, 'stead o' in de culled people's graveyard."

She spoke with conviction and moved toward the gate, observing that it was growing late and, if death had not already done its work, the change would, probably, take place before the turn of the day. The young ladies followed her, deeply interested and a trifle bewildered, utterly scouting Mammy's hypothesis, yet unable to formulate a satisfactory one of their own.

As she turned to close the churchyard gate, a strange sensation shuddered through Rebie, and it seemed to her that she was being watched by ambushed eyes. She glanced nervously to right and left, but no living

creature was in sight save the mud swallows under the eaves of the old church and the mocking-bird swinging on a branch overhead. With a smile at her own foolishness she clicked the latch of the gate sharply and hurried after her companions.

And the old building, left once more in solitude, took on new lights and shadows as the day waxed toward noon, and the graveyard lay as silent and deserted as though the progression of the seasons had brought the only changes it had known for years.

CHAPTER X.

AROUND the cabin where the old woman lay dying were knots and groups of negroes, standing aimlessly about, or sitting on the fence and woodpile. They talked in subdued whispers and cast ominous glances in the direction of the cabin. Now and again one would enter, remain a moment, and return to report that "de bref was in her still." The young ladies passed directly to the house, scarcely pausing to return the numerous salutations which greeted them.

The interior of the cabin presented picturesque and painful contrasts. The smoke-stained walls were adorned with gaudy pictures, glazed, and mounted like maps, and with prints cut from illustrated newspapers; the rafters sustained the usual accumulation—splint baskets, large and small, strings of red pepper, bags of seed, and an old musket with a damaged lock, held in place against a beam, by wooden cleats. In the wide fire-

place a few chunks, laid with their noses together, made a dull glow, and sent up wreaths of gray smoke. The calico curtain had been folded aside from the window and the garish daylight revealed the secrets of the place. On the bed lay the dying woman, her breath coming and going in fluctuating gasps, her eyes half closed and her wrinkled black face made awful by the sickly gray pallor underlying its darkness.

Colonel Kennedy sat in a low chair beside the bed, his crutches resting against the wall behind him. One withered hand was clasped in his and, every now and then, he would bend over and speak to her, using the familiar Southern term "Mammy." At the sound of his voice the eyelids would quiver and it would seem as though the clouded brain would feebly strive to formulate response; but, as she grew weaker, all effort gradually ceased. For a moment there was a slight stir near the door, followed by the entrance of Edward Kennedy and Dr. Seldon. The physician stepped at once to the bed, laid his finger on the pulse and bent low to catch the

labor of heart and breath. Then he shook his head, whispered a word to Colonel Kennedy and drew back beside Bernard, leaving the two gentlemen, with the half-dozen negroes composing the old woman's family, beside the bed.

The silence was intense, and the air grew heavy with the death presence. A messenger stole out with the tidings that the end was at hand, and the cabin noiselessly filled with negroes who, with the morbid instinct of their race, had assembled to witness the death scene. The ashen look deepened; the breath fluttered in faint gasps, and over the face passed that strange look of illumination which comes to the dying sometimes when the end is free from pain. Colonel Kennedy touched his brother's hand and the two men knelt, with bended heads, while the elder repeated the prayer for the passing spirit.

When all was over, the white people withdrew, leaving the family to that wild exuberance of passion which with tropical natures is inseparable from every manifestation of emotion. Outside of the cabin, the party

paused to greet acquaintances among the colored people, and for Colonel Kennedy to give the necessary directions about the grave. It was to be made beside that of old Nat, her first husband, in the burying-ground around the old church. Peyton would show the men the precise spot.

Then the brothers moved away to speak to an elderly colored man, who had come out from the presence of death and cast himself down on the woodpile, his brawny shoulders bowed and his head resting, face downward, on his folded arms. He was not weeping. When Colonel Kennedy spoke his name and laid a sympathetic hand on his shoulder he raised a countenance dull and heavy with pain, but tearless. It was an unattractive face, very black, and crude and unfinished of feature and outline, but the eyes looked out with the wistfulness, the dumb craving for response seen most often in the eyes of a faithful dog, and went far to redeem the brutality of the lower jaw. He did not rise, nor change his position, beyond the simple lifting of his head, but his air was

respectful and he listened to what was being said to him. He was old Nancy's only child by her first marriage, and had played with the two gentlemen in boyhood. A heavily built negro, strong and stalwart, despite his fifty odd years, with the reputation of being steady and harmless, but slow-witted.

"Where does Patrick work now?" inquired Edward Kennedy a little later, as he helped his brother to mount. "I haven't seen him around for weeks, until he came for me this morning."

"At the mine, I believe. A good many negroes are employed there. Redwood believes in the thing and keeps a good force on. Pat's a strong fellow, and not much past his prime. He can swing a pick with any man yet."

"Strong as a mule," assented Mr. Kennedy. "He was the best ditcher we ever owned. Here, Rebie, come and ride my horse to Broadoaks with your father. I'm going to walk back through the woods with Bernard. I want to stop by the graveyard."

During their walk Bernard mentioned Mammy's superstition and the instances she had given in evidence of its truth, and also told of the signs of digging found that morning in the burying-ground. Uncle Ned, as would most sensible men, laughed at the notion of spiritual interference in mundane matters taking so useless a turn. To mark out a grave in the identical spot where the person indicated would naturally be buried appeared a work of supererogation; while to set the sign of a coming disaster in a place where, in all probability, no human being would see it until after the disaster had occurred did not suggest great acumen on the part of the spirits. Uncle Ned's opinion of spiritual endowment ranged higher. The digging had probably been quite without intention, and had doubtless been the work of some idle negro passing through the graveyard with his spade. And so the subject was dismissed.

It was arranged that old Nancy's burial should take place the following afternoon, as negroes have an invincible objection to defer-

ring an interment one instant longer than necessity shall compel. No sooner is life extinct than they set about the preparations, which they are generally enabled to complete in an incredibly short time from the fact that on such occasions there is never a dearth of willing and active workers. A morbid interest in the dramatic effects of the great human tragedy is characteristic of a certain phase of development, and among negroes this interest is so intense that spectators race with disease to be in at the death.

At the appointed hour all the colored people for a radius of miles assembled at old Nancy's cabin to assist in performing the last offices. Here they met and mingled with those who had watched beside the corpse through the night and the men who had been engaged in preparing the grave. They lounged about the little yard and the outer room of the cabin, the women exchanging mortuary experiences and family gossip, while the men discussed the affairs of the neighborhood. Among the men were several who were employed about the mines and it was

mentioned that Mr. Redwood was in New York on business, which had rendered it a much easier matter to get leave to attend the burial. According to the general verdict Mr. Redwood was "a mighty head-strong boss, an' boun' to git er dollar's wuth o' work fur a dollar pay," while his more easy-going Southern vice-regent could quite comfortably content himself with eighty cents worth of service in the hundred of remuneration by filling in the vacuum with profane language. Mr. Redwood would return the following week, they said.

It was hinted, furthermore, that unless the yield of ore for the coming six months should exceed that of the past half year things might be expected to run to broomsedge at the mine. A man from the North had been down to inspect operations a few days before Mr. Redwood's departure and had, according to the negroes, gone away again "lookin' mighty lonesome, an' down-sot." If the present superintendent should even succeed in "making buckle and tongue meet" it would

be more than had been accomplished by any of his predecessors.

The Kennedys had announced their intention of following the remains of their old nurse to the grave, and their arrival was respectfully awaited. They came in force, Colonel Kennedy and his daughters from Broadoaks, and Mr. Edward Kennedy with his two sons, his daughter Susie and May Seldon, who was visiting at Stag Island, the name of Uncle Ned's plantation. The advent of the white people was the signal for the procession to form; the plain, dark coffin, garlanded with wreaths of flowers brought by the young ladies, was borne by six stalwart colored men.

The afternoon was overcast, with clouds banked along the horizon and an atmosphere so devitalized that it foreboded storm. The woods were motionless, every leaf and twig as quiescent as though deprived of life, and the sound of the singing, as the procession passed to the burying-ground, rose through the still branches in wild, plaintive strains, whose melody returned upon the brain with

hopeless sadness. At the graveyard the riders dismounted, and the procession broke and crowded into the inclosure without much regard for order; the white people standing aside so that those bound to the deceased by ties of blood might approach most nearly to the grave.

The coffin was lowered into the wooden box prepared for it amid deep silence, and then an old gray-headed negro knelt and offered up a prayer. His face was seamed and wrinkled, like wind-dried fruit, and his gnarled hands rested on the crook of his smooth hickory stick as dead bark rests against new growth; his voice, thin and reedy, growing more penetrating as he proceeded, rose and fell in a sort of singing recitative, which played on the nerves of the listeners until they thrilled and vibrated, responsive as harpstrings. As the climax approached the emotional excitement increased and vented itself in sounds of mourning which accompanied the voice of the speaker as the moaning of waves may accompany the cry of a gull.

After the prayer Colonel Kennedy made the assembly a short address in which he spoke feelingly of the dead woman; of her faithfulness to his family, of the affection which existed between them and of his own regret that the link should be severed. Then, in simple words he spoke to them of his own belief in another life and his hope of spiritual reunion in a state wherein death and sorrow and suffering should have no part.

He was heard with attention and then a hymn was sung. During the singing old Peyton stepped forward and slipped a small clod of earth into Colonel Kennedy's hand, which he held a moment and then cast into the open grave. The negroes, one after another, stooped and lifted handfuls of the gravelly soil which they threw into the grave as they sang, as a token that the ministrations of kindred and friends must here, perforce, come to an end.

It was a wild scene—filled with sounds and suggestions of whose mournfulness both eye and ear took cognizance. The plaintive music with its undercurrent of stifled sobbing; the

open grave with the dusky figures casting in the earth; the thud of the gravel as it struck the coffin lid combined to force on the consciousness a realization of the significance of the words "earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes."

Rebie completely unnerved, wept convulsively, with her head on Bernard's shoulder, and Colonel Kennedy, resting still on his crutches, gazed away into the distance with eyes that, seemingly, took little heed of the leaden sky, the darkling wood, or the sorrowing humanity at hand.

As they turned to leave the place they were joined by Geoffrey Bruce, and Rebie, glancing upward through her tears, met in his eyes a look of tenderness that was like sunlight through rifts in a dark cloud.

CHAPTER XI.

"WILL you come for a ride?" Bruce asked, when the party had remounted.

Rebie glanced up doubtfully at the sky. Her trim cloth habit and jockey-cap had seen good service, and were, in her estimation, past being injured, still the prospect of being caught in a thunder storm several miles from home was not alluring.

"Don't you think it will rain?" she queried.

"No," responded Bruce, gathering up his reins. "The clouds are too well distributed. The sky is gray all over. It's going to lower all the afternoon and thicken up and rain after nightfall."

He spoke with assurance, and as though his conclusion were the result of minute observation of meteorological laws. Rebie did not believe him to be one whit more weather-wise than she was herself, but the cool dampness of the air was grateful to her flushed cheeks, and the swift movement and need for keeping

eye and hand alert would tranquilize her nerves. When the wood road opened out into the main thoroughfare leading to Broadoaks she followed the motion of Bruce's bridle arm and turned her own horse in the opposite direction from that taken by the rest of the party.

At first Bruce made no effort at conversation. The girl's mood was uncertain, her emotions had been stirred by circumstances with which he had nothing to do; her imagination was filled with images and scenes apart from his image, or any scene which his presence would naturally suggest; her inmost thoughts were not, as yet, colored by his influence. Bruce felt this, and was content to ride quietly by her side until their moods should gradually adapt themselves and the conditions between them become harmonious. He was a patient man; his ten years' struggle with the Nemean lion of debt had trained him in the knowledge which teaches that at certain junctures the policy of inaction is the part of wisdom. Then, too, his naturally keen perceptions were quickened by the dom-

inance of the emotion most potent for the development of sympathy and insight. The state of his feelings toward Rebie Kennedy may be summed up in the scriptural phrase, "and his heart clave unto the woman, and, behold, he loved her as his own soul." So loving her he could understand with the subtler part of his nature and protect and care for her with the part which was more masculine.

They had turned aside into a road but little used and rode quietly, for the way ascended and was rocky and a trifle overgrown. On either hand undergrowth, scrub oak, sassafras and sumach bushes, interspersed with old field pines, encroached upon the roadway outstretching verdant arms as though to bar a passage. Bruce kept his horse a step in advance and held them aside for her to pass. In a scrubby little cedar a red-bird had perched himself, the dark green of the background throwing out the brilliance of his plumage. He turned his crested head about and glanced at them interrogatively, then, finding that they meditated no

harm to him nor his, flitted his wings and called to his mate, who popped her head out from under a twig and watched them pass, reaching forward to get a better view, with the frank curiosity of a rustic regarding the world from her cabin door. Among the bushes catbirds mocked and called to one another, and away in the fields, beyond the wood, partridges blithely whistled. Across the road a squirrel sped and whisked himself up into a tree with a great affectation of terror.

Rebie's thoughts drifted to another ride she had taken with Bruce some weeks before. They had called at Dr. Seldon's, away up the river, and, returning homeward, had stopped at Stag Island and rested for awhile, and tasted Uncle Ned's Catawba wine, supplemented by the delicious little cookies Susie was so clever at making. Sue had taken them into the old garden to see some new roses Aunt Mary had recently received from the North. They had sauntered along the old walks, bordered with hedges of green box, and sentineled, at intervals, with tall

box-trees trimmed into stiff cones; and had admired the honeysuckle on the arbors and the quaint circles and triangles where, earlier in the season, hyacinths, snowdrops and lilies-of-the-valley bloomed profusely. Bruce had called their attention to a peewee's nest, filled with ungainly, clamorous young ones, and lodged among the blossoms of a rose bush; and to the humming-birds, flashing like jewels, around the old mimosa tree, whose branches were covered with a wealth of fringe-like flowers of salmon pink. The air had been redolent of sweet things, the breath of roses and of jessamine, and the odor of box and calacanthus. Susie had filled her hands with flowers, and Rolfe had cut a great bunch of mimosa blossoms to send Bernard, because the tree did not thrive at Broadoaks and Bernard loved the perfume. Bruce had wanted to carry them all for her, but she would not let him. Her sister's gift must reach her uninjured; so, after they had mounted, she had insisted on having the bouquet in her own hands.

As they were coming through the little stretch of woods near the big gate, they had overtaken Crummie, with a brier-blade on his shoulder and old Boler at his heels. The boy had been poking about among the bushes and, as they neared him, a rabbit started up and ran across the road, almost under the noses of the horses, with the dog and boy in hot pursuit. Her horse had frightened at the noise and reared and given trouble; she had lost control of him, owing to the unexpectedness of the occurrence and her hands being encumbered with the flowers. How white Bruce had grown, and how swift and strong had been his grasp of her rein! And amid his alarm for her safety, and indignation with the cause of the commotion, how gentle he had been with the horse, how firm and soothing.

Rebie had all a primitive woman's reverence and admiration for courage and physical strength. Her fancy lingered over the incident with contentment. She liked riding beside him, they two alone together, shut into a world apart by the encircling forest;

she did not turn her face, nor glance toward him, but she was content that he should be there.

The road widened and grew better as it wound along the crest of the hill; the horses could move more briskly. Half unconsciously, the words of a warrior song rose to her lips and she sang them aloud in a soft voice that set itself to the rhythm of the hoof-beats:

“In days of old, when Knights were bold,
And Barons held their sway,
A warrior bold, with spurs of gold,
Sang merrily his lay:—
My love is young and fair,
My love hath golden hair,
And eyes so blue, and heart so true
That none with her compare;
So what care I,
Though death be nigh?
I’ll fight for love, or die.”

Bruce leaned forward and laid his hand on her horse’s neck. He had turned himself a little in the saddle and his face was nearly on a level with her own; it was pale, as that of

one in the grip of strong emotion, his eyes were alight, his nostrils quivered, and the hand on the horse's mane trembled.

"How is a man to prove himself?" he questioned, in a low tone, his eyes seeking hers. "*Then*, with lance and sword, by field and flood, he might show the love that was in him—might hope that his 'spurs of gold,' with all they were held to represent, would win him favor in a woman's eyes. But now!—*how* shall a man prove his longing to shake off unworthiness for love's sake? How shall he show her that he, too, would 'fight for love, or die,' if there were occasion? *Words* don't fill the measure—men who love least can talk best about it."

The woman shrank a little, drawing away in the saddle; her head drooped and she would not look at him; his earnestness thrilled, and at the same time troubled her. The horses, walking slowly, pressed against each other.

When he spoke again the man's voice had taken a tone of tenderness that was like the

note of a wood-dove, wooing his mate in spring.

“The love is the same,” he murmured. “It must be. Just that—to hold a woman apart, as in a sure fortress; to guard, cherish and protect her through life. To make love a refuge, warm and strong, filled always with sunshine and comfort. Is it not so, sweetheart? A man may do this still—may be a leal knight to his lady, a true husband to the woman who shall come to him as his wife.” He bent nearer, and his voice sank almost to a whisper, intense with emotion, penetrating with strange sweetness. “Will you come to me, love? Will you take the love garnered in my heart, and give me the right to care for you always?”

So he pleaded, pouring out at her feet the treasure of his love, royally, unselfishly, and with a true man’s proud humility.

And Rebie, hearkening as one in the unreality of a dream, did not know herself, nor her own heart. Did she love him? Could she love him? She could not tell. For, with the tones of this brave lover’s voice,

even in the midst of his pleading, imagination would mingle the tones of another voice which, to her had told no tale of love; and beside the impassioned face so near her would appear the face of another man. She was afraid, not understanding herself, and cried out to him that he must give her time; that he had bewildered her, and must wait and let her learn the truth from her own heart. She put out her hand to him, trusting him to be good to her, to take care of her, even though she should sorely try him. Just a little time, she said—a few weeks—a month! Yes, that would be best. In a month she would know and could give him his answer.

And Bruce forbore to press her, accepting the delay as a knight accepts his initiatory vigil.

CHAPTER XII.

IN the differentiation of the *genus homo* a good many things must be allowed for. Consideration must be given to antecedent causes of great variety and complexity—climate, locality, and the accumulated inheritance of traits and proclivities experience has generated and the survival of the fittest has served to perpetuate in the particular species to which a man may happen to belong. From the standpoint that a present generation may be the inevitable outcome of previous generations; that an individual may be “the sum of his ancestors,” it seems reasonable to demand that charity should enlarge its mantle, that judgment should wield something less ponderous than a sledge-hammer, and that justice should be tempered with a finer and more discriminating mercy. If, for example, a man could bring himself to realize that the fact of his neighbor being an ill-conditioned fellow may be due not, as he

hastily supposed, to purely individual "cussedness," but is rather the operation of a law of "cussedness," traceable backward until the mind refuses to follow, the existing exponent of the law might meet with more consideration, and instead of being hated and abused might come to be regarded with scientific interest. Also the man who takes away his neighbor's coat instead of being jailed or beaten might in time receive the cloak besides, since he doubtless but obeyed a resistless predatory law of great antiquity.

Could the general intelligence be forced to take cognizance of demonstrable facts a good many sins now regarded as scarlet might become on investigation only a lively shade of pink

Stuart Redwood, sitting on an empty powder can, turned bottom upward, and staring at the hole in the ground which represented the entrance to the Lone Jack mine, was indulging in a most unscientific line of thought relative to some of his neighbors. His trip to New York had been very disheartening and he had come South again feeling

baffled and mutinous. The syndicate, which he had the honor to represent, a gigantic financial octopus with legs extending pretty well over the country, had met in council and determined that unless Redwood should show them better reason for supposing that there was money in the Lone Jack mine within the next three months than he had yet been able to show at all, operations must be suspended and the stock-holders notified that they might thank their lucky stars they would not be required to throw good money after bad.

The syndicate, engaged in extensive mining operations in various localities, had neither money nor inclination to allow Redwood latitude for continued experiment in the, to them, trifling side issue in Virginia. This they demonstrated in language concise and forcible, influenced thereto, as Redwood believed, by the representations of the stranger who had been sent down to spy out the promise of the land. The big men, as usual, overlooked the fact that in knocking the props from the Virginia venture they would cause the thing to settle down on a few small

men who, financially, were incapable of standing from under.

Redwood believed in the mine, and had backed his belief with every dollar he was worth, and the admission of the mine to be a failure and acceptance of the fact that his stock, instead of proving a finger-post to fortune, must be regarded as simple evidence of miscalculation was a thing to which he could in nowise reconcile himself. His dominating nature rose in protest, and his will fretted and strained like a hound in a leash. Not even to himself would he allow that his judgment in regard to the venture might be at fault. True, the popular verdict pronounced the mine, for absorption without adequate return, no better than a horse leech; but then the popular verdict was Southern and, to Redwood, without comprehensive business basis.

His anger against the men in New York who refused to give him time and a larger command of money burned hot—so hot, in fact, that had the can on which he sat been full instead of empty the powder must have

ignited and, so far as Redwood was concerned, brought the matter to a conclusion. Upon certain fresh representations he had been able to secure that additional three months; but what was a pitiful twelve weeks wherein to combat and overthrow sentiments, prejudices, methods of thought and conduct which many times twelve *years* had been consumed in building? Redwood felt thwarted and ill-used, and sat very still, with a scowl on his face, allowing his mind, in spite of modern culture, to work along unscientific lines.

The man had been reared in a hard school, under a false and superficial system. All of his life he had been surrounded by the constant strain after wealth, or the appearance of wealth, until money had, insensibly, become to him a prime factor of existence. From the New England village wherein the richest man had been the man most considered, through a life of ups and downs wherein the fullest fruition of hopes appeared to attend on the longest purse, the omnipresent need of money had begotten in

Redwood the omnipresent greed for money. His realization of the possibilities of life, and his requirements, were well-nigh without horizon. Contentment with an existing state of things, to him, was stagnation. He wanted to plan, to work, to achieve; to be something and somebody in his day and generation, and, to his thinking, the initial step was the acquisition of wealth. Redwood's trend was practical. He intended to accomplish a good many things, should length of days be his, and chief among them he placed the accomplishment of a fortune.

A few years after the close of the war the attention of Northern capitalists began to be called to the existence of iron, manganese and slate in the James river valley and from time to time men would be sent down to prospect. The slate was found to be of fine quality and in vast quantities, and quarries were opened about thirty miles from the Kennedy neighborhood which paid very handsomely. Operations in manganese were not so successful, the ore having, even more than is usual with it, a deceitful habit of

lying in pockets and of giving out unexpectedly, after a fine show, in a manner which was felt to be exasperating. In one mine, worked for a time with some prospect of success, the shaft had not gone down fifty feet before that which appeared to be an underground lake was struck and, as no company can stand pumping water to waste where the supply seems inexhaustible, the venture had been abandoned.

In connection with it, however, Redwood had been sent to Virginia and had passed a week in the manganese region, and also visited the slate quarries. Certain peculiarities in the conformation of the country had impressed themselves upon his memory and when, five years later, he had found himself with a couple of months of unemployed time on his hands he had put into execution an intention long dormant in his mind and come down to Virginia to look about on his own account.

From the presence of iron, manganese, quartz, slates and shales in a sort of belt he began at once to suspect the existence of

auriferous gravels. He commenced asking questions and speedily discovered that the presence of gold in that section of the country was a well known fact. There was an old mine thereabout, the people at the court house told him, which had been worked in a spasmodic way before the war; but it did not amount to much. That is, it had never paid. Specimens of gold from it were in most of the museums and in the mint at Philadelphia. The jeweler at Memnon used no other for his work. The poor whites and negroes washed the gravel of a creek that flowed near the old mine and carried the grains and flakes of gold so obtained into Memnon to the shopkeepers screwed up in rags and bits of paper. It had always been done—indeed, it was supposed that knowledge of the whereabouts of the gold had been derived from the Indians. Even the first working of the mine ante-dated the memory of the oldest individual Redwood could discover about the place.

Accustomed to see brains quicken and faculties grow alert with the mere mention of

aught that might bear on the question of finance, Redwood was amazed at the indifference, not to say apathy, with which the presence in their midst of the king of metals appeared to have been regarded for years by these singular Virginians. They discussed the subject in an impersonal way, as one of no special interest to anyone save, perhaps, as local tradition. Later he learned that the neighborhood once, for a year or so after its opening, had had faith in the mine, which the mine had failed to justify. And not even Virginians, with all their traditional carelessness in regard to matters financial, can conjure up enthusiasm about that which has caused their pockets to suffer.

To the little town in an adjoining county, which rejoiced in the incongruous name of Memnon, Redwood at once proceeded, determined to thrust his acquaintance upon the jeweler and, if possible, obtain a sight of some specimens of the gold.

He found the jeweler an elderly man, very accessible and loquacious. When he learned that Redwood wished some trinket made of

Virginia gold and would prefer gold from that very section, he opened his show-case and handed out several trays.

"There isn't another man in the state could fill that order, I reckon," he remarked, as Redwood examined the trinkets. "It's good gold, too. Came from the old 'Lone Jack' mine, as they call it, over in the next county."

"Do you get much of it?" Redwood inquired. "The mine has been abandoned for years, hasn't it?"

"Yes, sir. The mine's played out. There are chemical properties in the soil, or water, about there that play the mischief with machinery; precipitate on it and corrode like a canker. During the war the Confederate government had powder works near there for a while; the earth yields considerable nitre. No wealthy company has ever had hold of the mine in my time. It's been tinkered at, but never really worked. Since emancipation knocked the bottom out of things in the South there hasn't been much capital in Virginia to risk in mines. A little

gold is brought me still, but nothing like so much as formerly. It is panned from surface gravel."

He opened a drawer and took from it a small paper parcel. It contained about a salt-spoonful of gold in tiny flakes, and one little nugget the size of a pea.

"This came from creek gravel. A fellow brought it in last week. The folks around there pan with an old tin bucket, or basin, and have no way of collecting, so the yield is never much."

Redwood examined the little nugget under a pocket lens. It was irregular in shape, but good metal.

"Do you often get grains as good as this?" He turned the specimen in the palm of his hand.

"Not now. In my father's time they came in even larger; but the creek gravel has been pretty well washed over, I reckon, and the niggers haven't energy enough to dig. Nuggets have been found as big as a sparrow's egg, and the rock from the mine used to yield fairly."

Redwood's interest deepened. What had been, might be again. With improved machinery, increased scientific knowledge and modern methods who could say what results might not be achieved? His pulses stirred, and his imagination constructed fair pictures of prosperity and success. He would look into this matter. Perhaps the wheel of fortune had a turn in it for him. He examined some rings in a little tray, fitting them, one after another, to his finger as he talked:

“Has gold been found anywhere else in this vicinity?”

The jeweler laughed. “The niggers say so; but in a place where, according to them it wouldn't be safe to look for it again,” he replied significantly. “There's a story among them that the old Kennedy grave-yard is full of gold. The niggers say that when the grave of the first old Kennedy was dug, after they struck the gravel, flakes of gold turned up with every spadeful of dirt as thick as stars on a clear night. The darkies of that day were a superstitious lot—worse even than now, and the tale runs that when the sun

shone on the dirt and into the grave they were scared nigh to death; thought it was sparkles of hell-fire. It has been claimed that gold has been seen in digging other graves, but in nothing like such quantity. The garnet ring, did you say? All right, sir. It's a good stone—full-colored, like old Port in sunlight. Came from North Carolina; so did those amethysts."

He turned to put up the ring and, while so occupied, continued to talk with the garrulity of the old.

"People used to say that the Kennedys were so proud they couldn't be satisfied to rest in common earth—had to be buried in gold. They were a rich and powerful family in the old time; owned a couple of counties among them. A wild lot, some of them, gambled, and kept open house; they half broke themselves that way, and the war finished the job for them. Nice people they were, too; but prejudiced and as obstinate as the devil."

The old man was digressing. Redwood brought him back to the point of interest

with another question. The Kennedy characteristics were of no interest to him at that stage of the proceedings.

"Wasn't the matter ever looked into?" he demanded. "Had nobody curiosity enough to have the soil about old Kennedy's grave examined and analyzed?"

"Lord bless you, no!" the jeweler responded, with amusement. "Dr. Kennedy wasn't the first man buried there. The parish church stood in the lot and, for some years, other people around used the grave-yard as well as the Kennedys. They had their own part portioned off, but the property was considered to belong to the church, although I don't believe either the Kennedys or Bruces, to whom the land first belonged, ever gave a deed to it. As far as I know, it's covered by the old Bruce title now. There was a sort of swop between the proprietors once to straighten out a line. All the folks about had plenty of money, in those days, in land and niggers, without prospecting among corpses for gold. The idea would be infernally unpleasant, you see. And 'specially if

the dead to be disturbed should happen to have been your own flesh and blood while living. The story has died out of late years. When Colonel Kennedy's wife and sons were buried there wasn't any talk of gold being seen. Nor when his mother's grave was dug either. The whole thing may be an exaggeration of the darkies."

Redwood's look was interrogatory.

"Niggers are, or used to be, immensely fond of exalting the horn of the family they happened to belong to. Their white people, in life or death, were the richest, best, and most considered in the country. There was gold found in that graveyard, I reckon, but nothing like what was reported. The niggers' description knocked California clean out of the ring."

There was a little more talk between the men of a discursive nature, and then Redwood paid for his trinket and took his departure with his head full of schemes and his blood beginning to heat with the gold fever. Within a week he had made the necessary examinations and returned to the North

intent on pushing forward the project he had in view. And so energetic and untiring did he prove himself that the possibilities of the Lone Jack mine, given through the spectrum of his hopes, showed colors sufficiently bright to cause a New York syndicate to take hold of it. A company was formed, stock was issued, and work in the mine recommenced.

CHAPTER XIII.

ALL through the autumn and winter Redwood worked, lured onward by promises that seemed ever on the point of fulfilment, yet, somehow, remained there impaled. There were many natural obstructions to success, chemical difficulties, and the lack of skilled labor which made every effort to overcome a disadvantage a work of time and calculation. The ignorance and stupidity of the labor he was forced to employ caused Redwood, at times, to gnash his teeth with impotent fury. He had no gift for understanding and controlling negroes and his abstract interest in them, founded on theory, cooled, under actual contact, and congealed into something very like antipathy. From over-rating them, he swung to the opposite side of the circle and under-rated them immensely. All of which the negroes came to know as well as though he had told them and, being in nine cases out of ten, more

knave than fool, made things far more difficult for him.

Redwood came to suspect at last, although he was powerless to prove, that his colored hands were, indirectly, responsible for many of his disappointments. Had the yield of the mine justified him, he would have discharged them all and imported trained miners; but it fell far short of his hopes, while the expense of getting out the ore was heavier than he had expected. He held doggedly to his faith in the mine in spite of reverses, installed a man of the country, who was familiar with their ways, as manager of the colored force, got a couple of practical miners down to act as superintendents and worked on, hoping for better luck, and sending North the best reports he conscientiously could.

He could not help feeling, however, that fortune was giving him a "rough and tumble" of considerable severity, for he seemed to himself to stand for his venture against the world. To a man of different caliber even his intercourse with the gentry around would have brought discouragement. He

enjoyed it, as a cultured man must always enjoy the society of his peers, but their lack of business method, their tranquility under exasperating and quite remediable conditions, and their good humored disbelief in his own ultimate success was as a shirt of Nessus to him. With Redwood, instead of begetting a sense of impotence and futility, the public attitude acted as a counter-irritant, and brought to the surface all the persistence, pluck, and acumen which had come to him from his Puritan ancestors.

His mind began to dwell on the idea that there might be gold in other places in the vicinity—better ore, and unvexed by the natural disadvantages which trammelled the Lone Jack mine. He began to prospect about the hills, taking bearings from his own mine and covering a radius of miles. Gradually, as his investigations remained barren of result, his circle diminished and his steps turned more and more frequently to the old Broadoaks church. He would lean on the wall surrounding it, or sit on one of the flat weather-stained tombstones and speculate as

to which might be the grave of the British surgeon, and whether, given that as a point of departure, it would not be possible to strike the vein, if there should be a vein, beyond the enclosure. The only trouble would be, he thought, the impossibility of guessing at the trend of the deposit. He might burrow like a mole all around the place and yet miss it after all. He could not even utilize his knowledge of metallurgical laws, for he was ignorant, not only of the trend, but of the nature of the deposit. Report said that the gold had showed itself in auriferous gravel, but the prevalence of quartz hereabout, the general aspect of the country and the developments in his own mine, five miles away, caused Redwood to incline to the theory of quartz veins. Then, also, the story was one of some antiquity, and had passed through too many mouths and borne the impress of too many imaginations not to have been altered in almost every essential save the main fact. If he could only examine the indications for himself he could, of course, arrive at some conclu-

sion as to how much of the account was legendary.

Haunting the place as he did, he soon became familiar with the fact that Colonel Kennedy likewise frequently visited the burying-ground, and from the hillside above, a window of the old church, or some other coigne of vantage, would watch the soldierly figure sitting motionless on his horse for moments at a time, gazing, with eyes sad with memories, at the spot of earth which held the material part of his loved ones.

Once, immersed in his own thoughts and calculations, Redwood had failed to notice the sound of the horse's approach and was only recalled to consciousness of his surroundings by the voice of Colonel Kennedy giving him "good-evening."

Redwood glanced up, and came across to the wall to shake hands. It was a mild afternoon in mid-winter, one of the kind that serve as a reminder that the brave old earth is slowly turning the hither cheek to the sun's caress. Even in quiescence Redwood had found his overcoat oppressive and had

thrown it back; he noticed that Colonel Kennedy wore none at all, and that his well-brushed coat was becoming shiny at the seams and his old slouch hat decidedly the worse for wear. His horse was good, however, and Redwood knew that the hospitality of his house was of the ancient order.

After a few unimportant remarks had passed between the men Colonel Kennedy expressed some surprise that a healthy, vigorous young fellow with life and hope pulsing in his veins should select so lonely and sad a place for his evening meditations. It was suggestive, he admitted, and quoted Grey and Shakespeare as he tossed the mane from side to side of his horse's neck. He appeared to be in an accessible mood and Redwood, toward whom the old soldier had always maintained a fine reserve, as one who occupied rather the position of guest than friend, took advantage of it and led him on to talk of the place, and of the people who lay buried in the shadow of the old church.

The grave of the founder of the family in Virginia, he was informed, lay amid the roots

of a giant oak which stood to the left of the building and near the center of the enclosure. It had been the old man's wish that an English oak should be planted on his grave and a tree had been imported from the home of his boyhood in Staffordshire. For centuries he hoped that his living monument would show to his descendants in the New World that, while his body might mingle with alien soil, with his spirit dwelt ever a love for the mother-land as sturdy and enduring as was the growth of her vigorous emblem.

As he told the little story Colonel Kennedy pointed out that the graves of the old Tory's immediate descendants lay mostly within the shadow of the oak's spreading branches, so that, even in death, he seemed to afford them shelter.

Pleased with the young man's attention, and stirred with memories Colonel Kennedy talked on, telling anecdotes of this and the other of the dead men and women resting near; serious stories some of them, and one or two that were pathetic; but for the most part clever and illustrative of traits of

Southern character, and of a mode of thought and life vastly different from that of the present half century.

As he listened Redwood began to realize that the speaker even belonged to another phase of development, and that motives powerful with ordinary men might, with him, possess less weight than thistle-down.

What possibility would there be of arousing cupidity in a man whose every word and action unconsciously made clear that, with him, sentiment was, and ever would be, a dominating force? What greed of gain could be awakened in a nature utterly oblivious of the thousand and one indispensable requirements of an artificial civilization? The colonel would, in all probability, vastly prefer to live out his life in a shabby coat, or no coat at all, rather than to disturb by a hair's breadth associations sacred and endeared to him, even though, by so doing, he might secure for himself and his family unlimited purple and fine linen.

Redwood made no allusion to the golden legend, either then or afterward, directly to

Colonel Kennedy; but he could not win his own consent to let the matter rest, so one evening when a good many representatives of the Kennedy clan happened to be gathered together at Broadoaks, he put an analogous case, laying his scene in the West and taking, as it were, the sense of the meeting. He was not surprised that the women should, with one voice, express disapproval, for the creature feminine is largely given to sentiment, or the expression of sentiment. In Redwood's estimation their opinion counted for very little, since he had known many women accept, without a scruple, benefits secured by means little short of unrighteous. But that men with perceptions far above the average, should adopt, unanimously, the feminine view struck him as remarkable.

"It's a barbarous thing to do," Uncle Ned declared. "No, I beg the savages' pardon! It's lower down than that—barbarism, so called, isn't incompatible with a decent sort of respect for the dead of one's own tribe. To kick a man out of his grave to hunt for

gold strikes me as about as low-down a thing as a fellow could do."

In the light which Uncle Ned presented it the picture was certainly unpleasant.

"A fellow who would countenance a performance like that would pawn his father's mummy, or gamble away the family burying-ground," Tom observed. "He ought to be tarred and feathered."

"The thing is done often," Redwood defended. "I don't mean that graveyards are opened to prospect for gold—a case like that is, I admit, unusual. But the dead are often removed from one place to another, and so long as the change is made decently and respectfully that is all that's required. Near cities such removals are of frequent occurrence."

"For sanitary reasons, or from motives of sentiment, I know," acquiesced Uncle Ned. "Then the thing is all right enough. Nobody can say a word against it. But the idea of violating a graveyard for *gold*—for as contemptible a passion as greed of gain, to me, looks uncommonly revolting. God knows

what the world can be coming to when the dead can't moulder away in peace because the living must needs sink a shaft in the place they occupy."

There was a great deal more said, all of it in the same vein, which, to the man of the world, sounded fanciful, overstrained, and devoid of practical foundation. He attempted to argue the case along the certainly tenable and defensible lines of the good of the many transcending in importance the repose of the few; but, after a few sentences, desisted, recognizing the hopelessness of establishing cool, calculating estimation of values in lieu of sentiments and prejudices with a people as emotional as were those inhabiting this primitive spot. When Tom Kennedy, a young fellow, and one, presumably, more at one with his generation than could be the older men, hotly declared that according to his—Redwood's—theory any action, no matter how infamous, might be defended, and that, viewed in the light he indicated that transaction in innocent blood eighteen hundred years ago might be established as meritorious, Red-

wood let the subject lapse. Of what use was it to talk common sense, or sense of any sort, to people apparently incapacitated by nature for its reception?

The thought of that gold haunted him, worked in him like a spell. In sleep, when imagination, untrammelled by will, made vague, disconnected journeyings into the unknown, he would seem to see, with the eyes of some inner consciousness, a picture that was ever near and ever the same. It would seem a day long past and a stately calm would brood over the land; the Broadoaks church, unstained by time, unsoftened by ivy would stand out against a forest background; around it a low wall, as now, but the sweep of turf within the enclosure was raised into hillocks in few places. The old oak was missing, and in its stead would appear an open grave, with negroes in garments of antique cut, throwing out the earth in spadefuls which glittered as they fell on a great heap near at hand, where the sunlight seemed to concentrate and, almost, to solidify into particles of gold.

In despair of accomplishing his design through the present owners of the soil Redwood turned over in his mind that other allusion made by the Memnon jeweler. The man had spoken of the property on which the church stood having once belonged to the Bruce family, and had mentioned some verbal and irregular transfers by which it had passed into Kennedy possession. He looked into the matter and found that, as the man had surmised, no legal steps had ever been taken and that the corner of land on which the church stood, comprising a tract of some ten or fifteen acres, was, in truth, still covered by the Bruce title-deeds; while the corresponding fifteen acres exchanged for it were still included in the plat of Broadoaks. The only legal reason for recognition of the exchange would be found in the fact that two generations had suffered it to pass unchallenged and, whether or not that would be held to constitute a title, Redwood was not sufficiently learned in the land law of the commonwealth to determine. For himself, were he in the position of representative of old Geoffrey

Bruce, he knew that he should make the attempt to have the act of his ancestor invalidated.

The discovery had been made before the return of young Geoffrey Bruce to his old home. Redwood informed himself as fully as possible in regard to the young man's business affairs and picked up such traditions relative to his habits and disposition as were current. From the long struggle, the hard work and self-denial which had freed the old homestead and the name of Bruce from the onus of debt he drew conclusions based on knowledge of practical men gained in other places. A man who had passed ten of his most impressionable years on the frontier, who had consorted with miners and cowboys, who had turned his hand to almost anything from swinging a pick to surveying for a railway, must have acquired sufficient experience and knowledge of the world to have developed recognition of the value of money. A practical man, who had roughed it among practical men, would undoubtedly regard the removal of dead Kennedys, and

dead other people, from Bruce land from a rational and non-sentimental standpoint. Particularly when there need be no disrespect shown to dead nor living, and much benefit might be obtained. With Bruce, according to Redwood's thinking, it would be simply lifting a foreign embargo from a domestic port.

The return of the wanderer caused Redwood to put aside a half-formed plan of opening the matter by letter, and, for a week or so, he had been content to watch and learn his man. Then had come Bruce's infatuation for Rebie Kennedy and the rivalry of the two men which put an end to possibility of an intimacy between them sufficiently close to admit of amicable discussion of private personal affairs, so far, at least, as Geoffrey Bruce was concerned.

With Redwood, of course, the dominant idea tintured even his love affair, and he could have talked business with his rival, in the intervals of their mutual endeavor to secure the attention of the young lady, with great composure and his usual acumen.

Through the conversation relative to the frequency, in the old days, of verbal transfer of bits of real estate which had taken place the day the party had spent on Old Sachem mountain, Redwood had learned that the present representatives of both families were fully cognizant of the action of their predecessors. Through an outside party he approached Bruce on the subject, setting before him what appeared to be the legal status of the case, and offering, in event of his deciding to reclaim the land, as he had a presumptive right to do, to purchase the same for a good figure.

The reply, given in ignorance, of course, of Redwood's identity, was to the effect that the property had been so long in possession of the Kennedys as to have passed utterly beyond Bruce calculation. That, as his grandfather had been satisfied with the exchange, and his father had, at least, tacitly endorsed it he, Geoffrey Bruce, had no intention of making any unneighborly stir in the matter. As, however, the affair had legal aspects which, heretofore, had been ignored,

and might in the future give trouble and, perhaps, cause litigation, he would, now that his attention had been called to it, at once take steps to have the transfer put into proper shape. The thing would be of interest and moment to the Kennedys, for on that little tract of land was situated their family burying-ground.

When this communication reached him Redwood laid it down on his table, leaned back in his chair and deliberately applied to the region lying south of Mason & Dixon's line, and to the people who dwell therein, language which for bitterness and force would have done credit to an ancient Israelite. This omnipresent sentiment, cropping up as it did at all points, was likely to prove a terrible rock of stumbling to him.

Even after many days and much mental disturbance he could see no rationality, no progress, no *anything* save egregious folly in the Southern position. He was balked, but not beaten. It was probable that Bruce knew nothing of the supposed presence of gold in the spot to which he was so ready to

relinquish all claim; or at most he could only know it as a legend of his boyhood. Could that fact be fully established a change might be wrought in his feelings in regard to the matter. Redwood had known the sight of gold to affect men curiously and bring about modifications in thought and action with a celerity that was little short of marvelous.

As he sat on the empty powder can, after his interview with the New York syndicate, and indulged in unflattering reflections about his neighbors, he decided that he must have one more round with fortune before he could consent to throw up the sponge.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOR a man to accept partial rebuff as permanent discouragement would argue little tenacity of purpose, for if he be true lover, with his heart set singly on the woman, and not doubly, as it were, one half on her and the other half on that which seems to be his own reflection in her eyes, hope must prove a staunch ally to his love.

It was therefore with no overwhelming feeling of dejection that Bruce regarded his interview with Rebie. Had she disliked him, or even been pronouncedly indifferent, she would have decided the matter at once instead of requesting time for consideration. A fortress which will entertain articles of treaty is already on the road to capitulation.

That which occupied Bruce most was the question of his own conduct during the interval of waiting. Should he remain in the neighborhood and avoid going to Broadoaks his motives might be misconstrued in many

ways. To Rebie he might seem to show pique, while to the others he would appear neglectful of his old friends—added to which considerations *amour propre* forbade that he should produce the impression of having been discarded before that disastrous fact should overwhelm him. On the other hand if he should continue his visits as though nothing had occurred it might seem that he wished to thrust himself on his sweetheart's notice, that he lacked pluck and patience to leave his cause untrammelled in her hands. Bruce knew himself too well to suppose that it would be possible for him to be near Rebie and refrain from, either directly or indirectly, making love to her. He was too simple-natured a man and too genuinely in love to have much thought to give to diplomacy. And above all things he wanted to be tender and considerate with her, to show her that true love must ever mean refuge and protection. She had put out her hand to him, trusting him, and begged that he would be good to her, and the young fellow stoutly determined that, come what might, there should

be no selfish persecution; he would show himself worthy of her trust.

While he debated the point, undecided as to his course of action, some letters came relative to property which he still owned in the West, which gave him an excuse for withdrawing, for a few weeks, from the neighborhood in a manner which would occasion no remark. Before his departure he called at Broadoaks to explain his mission and mention the, probable, length of his absence. He made no effort to see Rebie alone, nor did he betray any of the depression of a baffled lover; on the contrary he was as bright, cheery and companionable as usual, so that the slight feeling of consciousness with which Rebie was, at first, oppressed in his presence passed utterly away. She was grateful to him and, insensibly, her confidence in him and feeling of dependence on his care increased. When Bernard, who, with the insight of sympathy, was fully cognizant of the state of the young fellow's feelings, suggested that he should write to them during his absence she replied to his wistful look

with a smile and was conscious of a sudden emotion of regret when he bade her farewell. Which goes to prove that the policy of unselfishness may after all be the subtlest species of diplomacy.

His going left a gap in their lives, for they had learned to accept his presence among them as an integral part of their existence. About this time, also, Rolfe Kennedy returned to his duties in the city, Tom betook himself to the seashore, whither the Seldons had gone for a month and Redwood, to all seeming, became bodily engulfed by his mining operations so that, for a brief season, a dead calm settled on the old house at Broadoaks.

To Bernard, with fate fully determined and heart free from the systole and diastole of sentimental fluctuation, the quiet was not ungrateful. She attended to her household cares, practiced her music, busied herself with an accumulation of dainty sewing which she appeared to have on hand, and wrote long letters to her lover with a placid acceptance of the present and confidence in the future which to Rebie appeared enviable. Rebie

herself was very ill at ease; restless, and dissatisfied with her restlessness; filled with uncertainty, and outraged with her lack of definite purpose. She liked Geoffrey Bruce and disliked Redwood, at least, so she informed herself many times a day, striving to keep the two facts in their proper relations in her consciousness; but do what she would she could not dissociate the two men so that the thought of the one would stand before her uninfluenced by the thought of the other. It was as though the shadow from two distinct objects, separate in all save obedience to a law of nature, lay across each other upon her spirit and obscured its vision.

She watched her sister with speculative eyes and one morning suddenly put a question.

“Bernard, how did you know you cared for Rolfe? Please forgive my asking! It seems so difficult to determine. How *can* a woman be sure she loves a man well enough to give her life into his hands; to take his life into hers? It is all so strange, and the responsibility so great.”

Bernard was busy at the machine, running dainty little tucks in a strip of fine white cambric. On the floor beside her was a basket heaped with more material and the bed was littered with trimmings of various sorts. She arrested the motion of the machine and glanced quickly at her sister, then, instinctively perceiving something of the trouble of her mind, looked away again while she answered:

“There was never any doubt. I knew it as one recognizes the presence of light and sunshine, by restless yearning if it should seem for an instant withdrawn and glad contentment in its renewal. When the sunrise of her spirit dawns for a woman there is never any question. Her heart turns and inclines itself as did the bodies of the old sun-worshipers when their god arose.”

She gazed through the open window, across the shaded green of the lawn, to the quiet river and the blue of the hills beyond. Her eyes were brooding and introspective, her hand stroked the fabric under it with a caressing touch and her lips curved into a smile like

that of a woman who looks on the face of one beloved.

Rebie let her hands, also filled with pretty sewing, fall into her lap with a forlorn little movement.

“Suppose when one looks steadily at an object another object appears beside it, like the little false planet that torments astronomers when the lens are wrongly focused. How is one to know which is the true luminary and which the optical delusion?”

“Wait,” counseled Bernard, “wait, and try to adjust the focus. That can do no harm, and to be careful is a woman’s right. Sooner or later true love reveals itself, and then it is as the coming of a mighty king; the woman’s heart knows its master and rejoices in its subjugation. Anything short of this is counterfeit, and with it no rational creature will be satisfied.”

Bernard spoke with the emphasis of one convinced of the enduring truth of her position. She had followed Rebie’s lead and employed metaphor because she had intuitively perceived that her sister had not yet

arrived at the stage in which a woman yearns to bestow her confidence, and she knew that to give the help and counsel indirectly solicited without infringing on reserve would be most grateful. To pure and thorough natures love is a thing too sacred to be lightly dealt with. It is a presence into which the soul must enter with uncovered head, and feet freed from the sandals of worldliness.

The matter was dropped between the sisters; but later Bernard remarked to her father that Rebie seemed terribly out of sorts, like a person who had lost something and did not know how or where to begin her search for it. It was pitiful!

"If it's her heart I hope it may be in Geoff Bruce's possession," the father observed. "She misses the lad, I expect, and no wonder. He's a fine lad—a good straightforward lad, and his notions are those of the old school. He came to me one day and frankly told me the state of his mind toward Rebie and asked my permission to win her if he could. He said it didn't seem right to frequent my house in the way he was doing without let-

ting me know his object. That sort of feeling is growing rare among young men I notice. Its pretty much 'he shall take who has the power, and he shall keep who can,' in these days. The grace and deference of the old way struck me anew, and my liking for the boy was clinched by his observance of it. It's what his father would have done. Geoff's a chip of the old block."

Colonel Kennedy shared the universal elderly opinion that in most essentials of conduct his own generation occupied the crest of a wave in the movement of life. To find a custom of the past regarded by a man of the present pleased him as any ratification of one's own opinion always pleases.

"But," objected Bernard, "there is, or may be, another man in the case. Mr. Redwood has been paying Rebie a good deal of attention."

"Not that!" Colonel Kennedy hastily interrupted. "My little girl would never give her heart to a man like that! Redwood is a stranger among us—his feelings, traditions and modes of thought are totally alien from

ours. He'd hurt her all around continually and never know that he'd done it. There is such a thing as natural affinity, I reckon. Like should stick to like."

"It generally does," Bernard observed astutely, "so if it should turn out that Rebie and Mr. Redwood care for each other we will have to admit affinity—individual, if not hereditary. He's a very clever man; and the handsomest blond I have ever seen."

"He's got eyes mottled like a snake's skin," the colonel growled, in a tone that seemed to hold Redwood responsible for his visual imperfection, "and they've got a look in them, at times, as hard as iron. His hair grows straight from the scalp like the hair of an ape, and he couldn't part it in an even line to save his life. Redwood's got more intellect than he's got feeling, by a long shot, Bernard, and the sort of will that overrides obstacles like a cavalry charge. A flower had just as well try to draw sustenance from a rock as an emotional woman look for comprehension from a man like Redwood."

Bernard laughed. "Come, father, that isn't fair," she said; "if a man may be held irresponsible for anything on earth it must be for the color of his eyes and the way his hair grows."

The tap of Colonel Kennedy's crutches as he walked away had an impatient sound. He had set his heart on a match between his daughter and the son of his old friend and, in spite of his strictures on Redwood's love of dominion, the old soldier had mighty little appetite for being crossed himself.

CHAPTER XV.

ONE afternoon, about two weeks after Aunt Nancy's burial, and the departure of Geoffrey Bruce, Crummie came around the corner of the house to the place where Rebie sat on a little bench feeding a brood of chickens preparatory to housing them for the night, and dropped down on the grass near her.

"Miss Rebie," he commenced, in an insinuating tone, thrusting his bare toes out toward the bristling mother of the brood and then jerking them back in a manner provocative of onslaught, "Count, he in de stable, an' ole Morgan dar, too."

Rebie glanced up interrogatively.

"Sun ain't nigh down yit," the boy continued. "He way up yonder—mos' an' hour high. It be long time befo' dark."

Rebie picked up a silver mug from the ground and poured water into the empty sardine box which served for a chicken

trough. The chicks came to it and daintily dipped in their beaks. A sparrow flew down from a tree close by and drank with them.

“It one mighty pretty evenin’ fur a ride,” insinuated Crum, “an’ dat horse, he jus’ nat’ely spilin’ to git out’n de stable. Un’k Peyton say I kin take ole Morgan to go arter de cows dey done strayed so fur. Dat big wind las’ night blowed de fence down over against Eagle’s Nes’ an’ we-all’s mean ole cows done foun’ it out an’ gone visitin’. Mammy say I got to go arter ’em. Don’t you want to go ’long wid me?”

The proposal was so unusual that Rebie was surprised. She often took the boy with her on her rides, but the suggestion generally emanated from her. Eagle’s Nest was the name of the Kennedy homestead which Redwood had rented for the winter months. He occupied it still, the rightful owner having decided to take his family to the Springs for the summer. Rebie had no thought of Redwood in the matter, indeed she supposed him still in New York, for since his return he had not called at Broadoaks. She suspected

Crum, however, of other motives than disinterested desire to promote her enjoyment.

"What do you want me to go for, Crum?" she questioned. "I'm not going to do your work for you."

"Ne'er mind 'bout dat," the boy grinned. "I kin drive de cows myse'f—dat ain't nothin.' I want you fur comp'ny, Miss Rebie. I 'feared!"

"Afraid of what?"

"Ha'rnts."

"What!"

"Ghos'es! Sperets—dem things whar come out'n de graveyard. Folks say dey gittin' mighty rank 'bout dem woods we-all got to go fru. Say anybody kin jump up ghos'es, same as rabbits, whar want to, arter sundown an' befo' day in de mornin'. Dem ole ha'rnts jus' as sociable! It make gooseflesh bu'st out jus' to study 'bout how foolish dey is!"

"How foolish *you* are, you better say," Rebie retorted. "Who's been telling you such ridiculous and untrue stories?"

“Eve’ybody. Dey ain’t no story, Miss Rebie. Dey’s de befo’ Gawd-A’mighty gospel truf! You ax Wallis! Wallis been tellin’ we-all ha’rnts was buttin’ ’bout in dem graveyard woods, same as bats in a barn, fur nigh three mont’s an’ wouldn’t nobody b’leve him. Say ’twas jus’ Wallis’ foolishness—dat he pintly do git skeered quick!—mos’ liable to run frum he own shadow in de daytime. Wallis say ne’er mind, t’other folks gwine git skeered pres’ny.”

“What did Wallis see?”

The young lady’s voice was mocking. The statements of Jane’s eldest son must, she knew, be taken with allowance.

“Wallis say how he an’ one n’other man was out coon huntin’ ’long in de spring an’ ole Boler trail one coon tho’ de woods close by de ole church. Wallis say jus’ as dey got right ’ginst de church, not thinkin’ ’bout no ghos’es, nor nothin’ ’cepten de coon—all de windows in de church glowed out in a light an’ somethin’ inside started a fuss, like folks gittin’ happy with religion. Wallis an’ t’other fellow took out in a run like patter-

rollers was arter 'em. Dey never draw'd breath good 'twell dey got to A'nt Nancy house an' shot de door. Un'k Patrick was settin' in de chimbly cornder an' he jus' larf at dem boys—he larf an' he giggle!—say dem two de skeeriest niggers he been see sence freedom come out. Ne'er mind!—dat all Wallis say—ne'er mind! Un'k Patrick, he done quit larfin' now."

He regarded the young lady gravely and, seeing that she was paying attention, proceeded with his story.

"Arter dat Un'k Patrick come by de graveyard one time hisse'f an' see one ole ha'rnt standin' by one dem dar graves whar got flat rocks over 'em. Un'k Patrick say he warn't skeered none hardly, an' de moon was shinin' an' he stood dar an' watched. Say ole ha'rnt look like he spit on his hands an' retch over an' shove de rock; an' de rock it rolled away like 'twarn't nothin' but a sheet o' paper, an' de ghos' he went right smack down in de grave an' draw'd de rock over him agin."

Rebie laughed.

"The shadows played tricks on him," she said; "it is the way with shadows."

"No 'm," the boy persisted, "'twarn't nothin' played no trick. Dar ain't no foolin' 'bout it. He seed dat speret plain as you kin see dat speckled pullet. Some white mens bin see it sence den!"

This statement was supplemented in a tone which challenged further disbelief. Crum felt his position strengthened by it.

"Who?"

"Dem Kitchens. Dey was comin' home night befo' las', kase dey done make up de dif'ence good enuf to fiddle togudder agin, an' dey had been playin' fur 'em to dance by down at ole man Hunley's bigges' gal's weddin'. It was jus' befo' day-break an' dem men was walkin' wid a lightwood knot burnin' 'count o' de woods bein' lonesome. Whenst dey got 'ginst de ole church dey seed a light shinin' out de windows same as Wallis done. Dey warn't 'fear'd an' dey went inside de graveyard an' Jerry, he tried de church door. 'Twas fastened like it always do be, an' de light was shinin' fru

de chinks. Luke, he's light an' spindlin' an' he got Jerry to give him a leg an' clumb up to one de windows—" The boy paused and drew in his breath and sent it out again in a long sigh: his eyes dilated.

"What did he see?" demanded Rebie, her interest deep, despite her incredulity.

"He seed," Crummie answered, his voice very impressive, "one ole ha'rnt gwine up de pulpit steps, sorter easy an' slow, wid what look like one little baby coffin in his arms. Luke could n't see no lamp, nor nothin' like a can'el, nor no lightwood knot nowhar; but de light was shinin' up out de pulpit same as out'n a tar-kiln a-fire. Luke Kitchen 'low 'twar jus' awful, an' whenst de speret sorter hi'st up de little coffin like he was aimin' to slam it down in de fire, Luke, he jus' holler out '*Good Gawd A'mighty!*'—loud; jus' like dat. Den he drapped back on Jerry an' bof' of 'em tumbled on de groun'. Whilst dey was busy untanglin' demselves an' fixin' to run away de light inside de church went out an' dar come a mighty big fuss, like de roof had done squelsh in, an' dem men jus' lit

out—lippity-click—layin' hoofs to de groun', same as two horses gallopin'."

Rebie was immensely amused. She could readily account for the vision beheld by the two fiddlers. Weddings are generally convivial occasions, and old Hudson Hunley, a man living back among the laurel brakes, had, for years, been suspected of illicit practices by moonlight. He owned a bit of land with an orchard on it and always appeared to have money to spend, although he never glutted the local market with dried fruit, and had no visible source of income. A festivity at old Hunley's would, Rebbe thought, put men in a condition to see most anything in the way of spirits. As to the tales the negroes told she attached no importance to them; any more than she had always done to her Mammy's superstitions, or the stories of witches who took off their skins and rode broomsticks at night, of animals who talked and schemed, and of serpents who milked the cows and finally turned into negro women, with which her imagination had been regaled in childhood. According to the colored seers

every graveyard in the country was surrounded by a cordon of ghosts of great activity and unlimited resources.

She signified her willingness to Crum to act as his protector and went indoors to put on her habit while he saddled her horse. When Count was brought around she was waiting at the gate and put up her hand to her favorite's neck to caress him before she mounted.

"Why did you put on the old saddle, Crum?" she inquired, noticing that the girth looked insecure.

"Couldn't find no y'uther," the boy explained. "Miss Bernard, she got de keys in her pocket an' she gone down to de fish pond wid Mars Julian. Dat all right!" as Rebie gave the saddle a shake, "it ain't gwine come loose. I done tie it strong wid a piece o' rope."

He held the horse by the bit until Rebie mounted and then scrambled on his own steed, a heavy looking plow nag accoutred with a blind bridle,

When they neared the church Crum was for increasing the speed; but Rebie, bidding him go on if he were afraid, turned aside and rode up to the wall of the enclosure. The place looked peaceful and undisturbed, a very quiet haven into which an old hulk might drift and go to pieces after weary buffeting with the waves of life. The association, even in imagination, of nocturnal perturbation with so calm a spot seemed little short of profanation.

The way led them past the house at Eagle's Nest, for the perfidious quadrupeds of which they were in search had strayed far afield. It was a square brick building with a stone portico, substantial, angular, and shamelessly devoid of beauty. The road led along just outside the yard fence and Rebie glanced across at the house, noticing, as she did so, that the parlor windows were open and that Redwood was sitting on the porch. He took off his hat and rose from his chair with the evident intention of coming to the gate to speak to her should she evince the faintest disposition to pause. Rebie returned his

greeting and, as she did so, unconsciously threw most of her weight on the stirrup side of the saddle; a thing she had been careful to avoid because of the infirmity of her girth. As luck would have it the very instant she had sacrificed equilibrium to courtesy her horse got his foot in a hole and stumbled; the rope in which Crummie had placed his trust proved no better than rotten hemp, and Rebie found herself lying in a heap in the middle of the road with her horse, startled and bewildered, gazing at her from the extreme limit of the bridle, which she still held in her hand.

Almost before she could realize the disaster, Redwood had dashed to the rescue and lifted her to her feet, and was hurrying out inquiries in an anxious voice. Rebie, astonished and shaken, but not in the least hurt, noticed that his face was pale, and it struck her as a curious coincidence that she should have horseback adventures—or rather misadventures, with both her lovers. She laughed his anxiety lightly away.

"I'm not in the least hurt," she declared. "Not even a bruise or scratch on which to establish a claim for sympathy. It was an utterly safe and ignominious tumble. Bernard had my saddle locked up and was away with father somewhere on the plantation with the key in her pocket. Crum cobbled up this one with rope, and the result you have witnessed. Indeed, I'm quite sound in wind and limb," observing that he still regarded her anxiously. "I'm not even hysterical; only ragged and abominably dirty." She glanced smilingly down at her dust covered habit and thrust the toe of her boot through a gaping rent.

Redwood's hand sought the lapel of his coat with a man's instinctive gesture when a pin appears the thing adequate to meet the occasion. The search, as usual, proved abortive. Rebie laughed.

"Come up to the house," he suggested, "and I'll get you a needle and thread, and dust you down a bit. Were you going anywhere in particular?" He held open the gate for her.

Rebie explained to him that she was only taking a ride, and it was arranged between them that Crum should be despatched on his errand while Redwood, after fitting the saddle with another girth, should himself escort the young lady home.

The Eagle's Nest parlor was a handsome room, very lofty in the pitch and wainscoted from floor to ceiling. From the dark background of the woodwork the old portraits, in heavy frames of faded gilding, stood out in relief; the ladies in short waisted white gowns, with high puffed sleeves, or with lace kerchiefs demurely folded over full, velvet covered busts; and the men, most of them, with strangulating stocks and fancy waistcoats. The old spindle-legged piano was covered with a dark red cover wrought gloriously with a border of needlework of the sort on which a past generation wasted much time and eyesight. Other specimens of the same work decorated ottomans and firescreens and spoke volumes for the industry of dead and gone Kennedys. On the mantel were old time ornaments, candelabra with crystal

pendants and quaint vases of Wedgewood and Dresden wares. The place had a restful look, as though, having held its individuality through generations of change it might continue to hold it until time itself should cease. The influence of the room suggested permanence.

Rebie was familiar with the place and, as she entered, glanced around with much the same affection in her look as she was wont to bestow on the old rooms at Broadoaks. There was a family likeness in all the Kennedy homesteads. While Redwood went for the promised needle and thread, she noted the infinitesimal changes which the unguarded occupancy of a man had produced. There were newspapers littered about, and some books on mineralogy which she had never seen before, but no cigars nor pipes, and no odor of stale tobacco about the place. Redwood was a smoker, she knew, and it pleased her to think that he should have respected the room which had always been the peculiar charge of ladies. The truth of the matter was, however, that Redwood pre-

ferred his cigar in the open air in summer, and furthermore had only moved a few of his possessions into the parlor the day before, because it chanced to be the coolest room in the house. Usually he sat, or worked in a smaller room across the hall; when he was not at his office at the mine.

The ornaments had been removed from the marble-topped center-table and the table itself covered with a thick linen carriage-robe and pushed in front of one of the tall, narrow windows. The light fell full upon a handsome microscope on a brass stand, an assortment of chemical apparatus, a small collection of specimens of minerals and a little heap of sandy, gravelly soil on a fragment of newspaper.

Redwood returned with a dainty little sewing case, of the sort prevalent at fancy fairs, and a large and business-like looking whisk-broom. He made Rebie stand up and brushed her habit in a masterly and scientific manner. Then he would have given her a cordial, protesting that her nerves must have received a shock and that she must submit to

be prescribed for. He even brought out a dainty little jug of exquisite Bohemian glass, and a fairy-like cup that resembled a delicate rose-colored jewel. But Rebie would have none of it, vowing that it would blister her throat and that she had sustained no shock at all. She took the little jug in her hands, however, and expatiated on its beauty and shook it so that the flakes of gold quivered and floated in the crystal fluid like star-dust in ether.

“How beautiful these things are,” she said, and held the little cup to the light, turning it to enjoy the prismatic hues struck out by the sun’s rays, and reveling in the perfection of its color with the abandonment of an artist. “Tell me of them. I know so little of the countries from which they come.” She glanced at him with eyes filled with interest.

Then, exhilarated by the fact of having her alone with him, under his own roof, as it were, and moved also by a deep purpose, Redwood talked as he had never talked before, as, in all probability, he could never talk again. In language that glowed with

color and light, with imagery at once powerful and picturesque, he painted for her scenes of richness and beauty which, for the moment, caused the primitive life she had led amid her mountains to shrivel into angular and limited outlines. As with the wand of an enchanter he caused her to behold the glory and delights of wealth, the beauty, the culture; the development possible from travel, from association with the rich and cultivated of all lands, from the boundless opportunities which money alone can command. He pictured for her visions of enchantment woven of material delights, of form, of sound, of color, of all that can stimulate the imagination, or appeal to the senses, worthy of a lotus-eater's dream of paradise. In one word, he showed her the halls of Eblis through eyes, as yet, unopened to the burning hearts which those that dwell therein must bear forever in their bosoms.

Rebie leaned forward in her chair and listened; her hands lay together in her lap, the needle motionless, the rent forgotten; her eyes dilated, her lips were parted, her

breath came quickly. A part of her nature heretofore unstirred was responding to Redwood's touch as an instrument responds to the hand of a master. These visions of a fuller, freer, more exciting existence than she had ever pictured to herself, even in day-dreams, thrilled her imagination and caused her nerves to quiver like the action of a powerful drug.

And the man before her saw it and exulted and wove his spells around her fancy with the subtlety of a magician. He would be her master, he proudly told himself. When he could come to her and say, "Come with me and behold the world and the wonders thereof," when he could lay chains of gold on the delicate wrists and encircle the white throat and shining hair with ropes and crowns of jewels, she would place her hands in his and follow him through life, till death. This last hour's insight into the weaknesses of her nature had given him his que; had showed him afresh the power and the might of gold.

The sun was sinking fast; quivering, horizontal rays fell across the lawn and through the open window, touching the two faces, brightening the aureole of Redwood's hair until it glittered like burnished gold, and striking answering rays from the jewel on his breast and from the rings on the girl's still hands. A long finger of light fell athwart the table and seemed to point to the heap of ore and gravel. Redwood turned to it and, leaning over, raised a lump of grayish-white rock, seamed and flecked with tiny threads and points of metal, and handed it to her.

"There is the magician's wand," he said, slowly. "*That* for us also can open the way to all the beauty and enjoyment of which this life is capable. *That* is the secret of power, for before it all men bend as the genii of the Eastern legends bend before the spell of the magi."

Rebie turned the bit of quartz in her hands and looked up at him. "It is—" she hesitated and caught her breath.

"Gold."

He moved nearer; his eyes holding her eyes with strange domination; in them burned a light which the girl felt communicating itself to her own. She shivered, and then, with a swift sense of danger, rose hastily to her feet and turned from him with some half inarticulate exclamation about the lateness of the hour.

Redwood pulled himself together, checking the words which were trembling on his lips. Under the stress of excitement, the influence of her presence, he had been near committing a serious indiscretion. He had no wish to speak just yet. There would be time enough for that when he should have carried his point about the gold. In the meantime he was satisfied with that which he considered the success of his experiment. He would bide his time.

During the homeward ride there was but little said. Each felt that, in some mysterious way, they had passed through an ordeal, and that, for all time, their relations toward each other were changed. When Redwood lifted her from her horse at the

Broadoaks gate Rebie could have truthfully affirmed that, to outward seeming, his manner of performing the service was the same that it had ever been—yet, there was that in his touch, his look, his very atmosphere which stirred and troubled her nature to its nether depths, as water is troubled by the falling into it of a heavy substance.

She leaned on the gate and watched him as he rode away in the gathering twilight. There had been no question between them of his coming in: neither wished it. When his tall figure had been swallowed in the gloom, and even the sound of his horse's hoofs deadened by distance, she turned and walked slowly to the house, her mind working along unfamiliar lines.

Bernard was singing to her father; the air and even the words floated out distinctly to where Rebie stood on the porch steps:

“My love is young and fair,
My love has golden hair,
And eyes so blue, and heart so true
That none with her compare—
So what care I—
Though death be nigh,
I'll fight for love, or die.”

The girl listened, with her head bent to the sound. And over her mood there gradually crept a change such as takes place when swamp vapors are lifted and dispelled by a southwest wind.

CHAPTER XVI.

"YES, *sir!* That thar is *my* notion 'bout the matter. 'Tis, for a fact," and Luke Kitchen brought his clenched fist down into the hand which rested, palm upward, on his knee with a resounding thwack. "You can't git buckle an' tongue to meet under n'ary n'other strain. Ghos'es! Shucks! Who b'leves in sech durned foolishness?" His tone was indicative of limitless contempt.

"Heap o' folks does. You warn't so blamed fur off frum b'lewin' it yerse'f night afore las'. You *run* like you had cornsid'rble faith."

Jerry turned his quid in his cheek and reached down for a stick to whittle. The brothers were seated on a beam which had been cast aside from some building, and lay near the engine-house of the Lone Jack mine. It was warped and cracked by the sun and Luke, following his brother's example, took out his knife and cut from the edge of it a

long sliver of wood which he reduced to tiny shavings as he talked. The men took a little spell at mining, now and then; it diversified farming and was more productive of ready money. It was the dinner-hour and the hands who worked above ground, and a few who were employed near the mouth of the shaft had finished eating and were lounging about, smoking and chatting until the signal should be given to resume work. The men who worked in the galleries took their meals down with them and did not come up but once in the twenty-four hours; it saved time and trouble.

Near the entrance to the shaft there was quite a village of shanties, a store, and the huge building in which was the engine and the places for sorting the ore and getting it ready for the stamping-mill. In one corner of this building was Redwood's office, and near it lay the beam whereon the men sat. Near the office window, but hidden from the men by the angle of the house, an empty packing box had been turned over to form a seat. On it a heavy looking negro, with

powerful shoulders, and a face like an image roughly outlined with the fingers in a lump of tar, had placed himself with his dinner pail beside him.

The Kitchen brothers looked like twins, although there was in reality several years difference in their ages. They had the same grizzled brown hair, worn long—the same blue eyes, the same scraggy beards and the same obstinate high-tempered expression. Standing, they were of different build, Jerry, the elder, being heavier and more muscular; but sitting, as they were now, slouched forward with their elbows on their knees the likeness between them was marvelous. They were discussing an adventure which had befallen them a night or so before, and differed as usual.

“You war pow’rful flustrated,” Jerry persisted, keeping the matter in a light he fancied likely to be aggravating. “You ’lowed befo’ Gawd an’ ther hebbenly host o’ cherikins thet you hilt it fur a ha’rnt.”

He laughed; a short dry chuckle, reminiscent of delight in his companion’s terror.

Luke echoed it; but with an inflection that indicated a different object of derision.

"You war tremenjous skeered yerse'f," he declared, still grinning. "An' you had n't no excuse n'other, not havin' seed what I seen. You run like a plumb horse-racer. You did, fur a fact."

"Long o' bein' nigh mashed an' pounded flat'n a pan-cake by you settlin' down 'pon top o' me like a sack o' meal on a mill flo'. It shook up my thinkin' machine so bad thet I jus' made out to follow on your trail like one fool sheep follows another."

Luke snickered.

"You did n't *run* like you was mashed none to hurt," he observed. "An' frum ther time you made an' the rate you traveled I'd hev said yer thinkin' machine was ekal to keepin' yer legs in motion. Looked to be workin' toler'ble peart! An' *you* had n't seed nothin' n'other."

Since Jerry's fright had been purely vicarious Luke had him on the hip and he knew it. The adventure altogether had given Luke an ascendancy by which he was not slow to

profit. Jerry, not having beheld the singular scene presented by the interior of the church had been obliged to accept his brother's description of it which, of course, placed him at a disadvantage.

“Shucks!”

The tone was intended to relegate both the sight and him who had gazed thereon to the limbo of an unutterable scorn. Luke, being hardened to such demonstrations, as well as practiced in them, pursued his own line of thought uninfluenced by the fraternal attitude.

“No, *sir!* I hev been a perfessin' member o' ther Method'y persuasion fur nigh fifteen ye'r an' I've seed a heap o' devilments in my time by day *an'* night; but I allus know'd 'em fur human devilments an' I don't b'leve thars no y'uther sort 'pon this y'earth. In ther Scriptor it air sot down fur a p'nt-blank fact that ther dead shall be raised at ther judgment day, an' thar ain't n'ary word said 'bout thar gittin' up no sooner. N'other I don't believe they does. Ther time is sot apart, an' ther dead air hilt down to it no



A DARK HAND STOLE DOWNWARD FOR THE SPADE.—Page 251.

matter how servidgerous they gits along o' bein' cramped layin' so long. Thar ain't no pardonin' out, nor breakin' jail afore ther term's served, to my notion."

"Who war thet you say you seed over yonder at Broadoaks church night afore las', ef 't war n't a ha'rnt?" Jerry demanded.

"'T war a man—same as we-all."

"How you make thet out?"

"Bekase I been figgerin' it out in my thinker ever sence I shuck off ther notion o' its bein' a ghos', which I wouldn't er took up with if I hadn't been frolicin' an' got my religion overlaid with eatin' an' drinkin'. He war a broad-shouldered fellow in a white shirt an' his gallus buckles shined in ther light. I seed 'em plain as ever I seed my own whenst I've hitched 'em over my own shoulders a-holdin' of my breeches up whilst I done it."

The negro had poured some cold coffee from a bottle into the top of his tin bucket and was lifting it to his mouth. He paused, and bent forward, listening: the coffee dribbled through the little slit in the top, where a

ring had once been soldered on, and the drops fell, one by one, down on his knees.

“What about thet thar light in ther pulpit you ’lowed were the blaze o’ hell-fire? An’ ther little baby coffin ther ha’rnt war a-handlin’ so brash?”

“Mout er been a lamp, or a lantern sot inside, on ther pulpit flo’. And ther baby coffin—fur ther thing didn’t look like nothin’ else, ’ceptin’ maybe a fiddle case—thet thar mout er been some sort o’ long box, or hamper. I ain’t had time to figger it all out, but a natchel born fool would know a ha’rnt could n’t tote no box!”

“I dunno how he’d know so smart if he had n’t never seed no ha’rnt,” objected Jerry, making an unfair double. “’Tain’t sensible to lay down ther law p’int-blank ’bout what a ha’rnt kin do, an’ what’s beyant his power ’twell you git acquainted with a ha’rnt an’ larn his motions.”

Luke was provoked; but he knew his brother’s spirit and could gauge its contrariness by his own. He had a theory to develop, and the time for the signal to resume

work was close at hand, so he could not afford to be touchy. He had heard a bit of news which had set him thinking and putting two and two together.

“Ever see ther new doctor chap whar settled in Memnon las’ winter?” he abruptly demanded.

“No. What of it?”

“Folks say he’s turrible severe—do n’t think no more o’ cutin’ up a fellow to see if his insides air out o’ gear or in, ’en what we-all would o’ slicin’ up a hog at killin’ time. He’s thet keen arter his trade thet he’ll root corpses out’n thar graves, arter ther dirt have been trompled, an’ ther calkerlation made thet they air safe ’twell jedgment day anyhow, ef he takes a notion they’ve slipped out’n this world by a way thet’s onbeknownst to him. I p’intly do *despise* to see a man so damned meddlesome!”

“Look like a man have got a right to *die* anyway he kin, ’thout no odds bein’ took.” Jerry volunteered the remark in a reflective tone.

"Does so," acquiesced Luke. "But this here young fellow won't agree to it. They say he hev got some pore creeter's bones a-settin' up in ther cornder o' thet thar office o' his'n a-grinnin', an' a-shakin' of its legs in every puff o' wind like it 'twer a-back-steppin' ter music. An' thet thar pore creeter 'lowed whenst he laid them bones down in ther groun' thet thar they'd rest 'twell ther horn blowed an' judgment day broke over ther mountains. An' all his relations an' his friends 'lowed ther same thing whenst they was a-wailin' an' a-weepin' o' briny tears, an' a-pattin' down ther dirt on him with thar shovels. An' thar he be now a-grinnin', an' a-back-steppin' in that thar doctor's office. It's an' everlastin', dog-goned scandal! That's what 'tis!"

His tone was a curiously graded mixture of pity and indignation. He took a dingy cotton rag out of his hat and wiped his forehead and his fore-arms. The sun was at the zenith and the day was hot. When he had replaced the rag he resumed:

“Thet thar leetle gal baby o’ Steve Fletcher’s whar died week afore las’—folks say ther leetle creeter went mighty cur’ous. Look like she war conjured, or somethin’. All ther wimmen-folks frum fur an’ nigh tried thar hands doctorin’ her, an’ done ther best they know’d, an’ ther best thar fam’lys know’d plumb back to thar great grandmammies. ’T warn’t no use. Ther leetle thing—she war a pretty little thing—war took. An’ they say thet they hadn’t even put her in ther coffin afore this durned meddlin’ fool o’ a doctor come thar to ther house o’ mournin’ an’ wanted to hold what he called a ‘mortal zamination’, or some y’other sort o’ devilment, jus’ to find out what kilt her. Like what dif’ence on God-A’mighty’s y’earth it could make to them thar mourners *how* death struck arter ther blow were hit home! Whenst ther word war named amongst ’em Steve retched up over ther door an’ took his rifle out’n ther hooks an’ jus’ *dar’d* any man to lay so much as a finger on his baby.”

“Steve would’r gin him a center shot, I reckon,” commented Jerry. “He’s a rare

good 'un with a rifle whenst his monkey ain't up—when t'is he's a rattler, an' don't you forgit it! 'T would er served thet thar ser-vidgerous houn' right, too! A fellow whar's got ther heart to aim to run a knife into a dead baby—an' a gal baby!—air a hard enough case to y'earn a piece o' rope an' a hickory limb afore he gits through."

Science meets with rough recognition at the hands of prejudiced ignorance. Humanity wages ceaseless war on those who seek to improve its conditions. It has been the history of mankind from the beginning that when intellect and emotion are forced to lock horns, intellect, in nine cases out of ten, will be pushed to the wall.

The negro man's coffee had all dribbled through the slit and soaked into his garments; but he still sat with the bucket top in his hand and made no effort to go on with his meal. His heavy face wore a perplexed look, and his eyes brooded.

Jerry leaned suddenly forward and laid his hand—the long, nervous hand of a musician,

in spite of its roughness and sunburn, on his brother's knee.

"Whar war thet body buried?" he questioned in a low voice.

The other man caught the implication in an instant.

"Not *thar*," he answered. "She war buried in Steve's garden. His wife wanted ther child put close by so she could 'tend to ther leetle grave. 'Twas ther fust she ever lost, an' wimmin take comfort in such things."

A thought had seized hold on Jerry and struggled for expression.

"Thet ha'rnt over *thar*," he suggested, and jerked with his thumb in the direction of the Broadoaks graveyard.

Again Luke apprehended his inference with marvelous quickness.

"I've been addled with ther notion ever sence I hearn 'bout Steve's baby. Thar ain't been no white buryin' in thet graveyard, howsumever, sence ther colonel's mother war put away an' that's nigh ten ye'r ago. He couldn't want nothin' long o' *her* this late in ther day. Just a passel o' bones is about all

lef' o' them Kennedys by now, I reckon. Thar's ther old nigger, though."

"Any man would ruther his folks *bones* would be let to stay whar he put 'em, 'en not," Jerry remarked, "an' 'specially his mother's."

The signal sounded and the men rose to go back to their work. The negro rose likewise and fastened up the bucket which still contained the bulk of his food. He raised the box a little and slipped the little pail under it and slouched around to the door of the engine-house. The great wheel had lifted a bucket of ore to the surface; it rose slowly, swung free of the mouth of the shaft and veered toward the negro who reached out a strong iron hook and drew the bucket to the receiving pen and dumped out the ore.

Redwood rode up and dismounted. He stood for awhile near the shaft watching the operations. The negro drew near, pausing in his work, and extended his hand for the bridle. Redwood surrendered it without turning his head, but with the customary formula of acknowledgment of service. His

communications with colored people were always of the briefest and dryest. There was none of the sympathetic affinity with humanity for its own sake which is a concomitant of broad and tender natures, in Redwood's composition. Negroes were to him now simply very defective and unsatisfactory implements which he was forced by circumstances to employ, in default of better, for the furtherance of a specific end. As sentimental creatures capable of love and pain they had no interest for him. It was a pity. The wag of any sort of dog's tail is a pleasanter thing than the sight of his teeth.

The horse whinnied softly and rubbed his nose against the negro's shoulder as he was led away. They appeared to be old acquaintances.

The manager came forward and accosted Redwood, and, after a few moments conversation, the two men entered the office together.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LIGHT burned later than usual in the office of the Lone Jack mine on the night of the thirty-first of August. The miners, those among them who had noticed the fact, remembered it afterward and mentioned it to one another for, ordinarily, the light would be out and the office closed by nine o'clock—that is, Mr. Redwood's office; the manager might be seen at all hours in his own room. One man testified that, in passing, he had glanced in at the open window and seen Redwood bending over his desk writing; and that, even as he looked, Redwood had risen and walked the floor, with his hands clasped behind him and his head drooped, like a man in heavy thought. The time had been, as nearly as he could judge, between ten and eleven. He had not looked at the clock in the engine-room although he might easily have done so, for a light burned there all night. He would not swear to the hour

because he only judged from the position of the moon and the way the shadows fell.

While late for Redwood to be in his office, it had been early for the hands to be in their beds, and yet deep silence had enfolded the cabins. Usually there would be plenty of noise of a social sort among the men after work hours. Jerry Kitchen had his banjo there and would thump a tune for the fellows sometimes and the negroes, such as "had n't got no religion" would double-shuffle and cut the pigeon-wing to the music. There had been no banjo-playing that night for Jerry had hurt his thumb the day before and had it tied up in a rag with axle-grease, and all hands, white and black, had turned in extra early.

The only living creature, besides Redwood and a stump-tail mongrel, he had seen about was a fellow sitting on a box near the corner of the engine-house. He had been leaning against the wall, as a weary man leans to ease his muscles, and the shadows thereabout had been dense, so that he could not make out which of the hands it might be, indeed, he had not tried to do so. The man was

doing no harm, and anybody had a right to sit there. He could not even tell whether it had been a white man or a negro, only he knew the fellow had been smoking—a whiff of tobacco had come to him; plantation leaf it had been—the sort most of the hands smoked. At the moment he had not been conscious of observing even these details. He had only glanced into the office because the window had been open and the light inside appeared unusually brilliant. Redwood had two lights burning, close together on his desk. After a turn or two about the room Redwood had come to the window and looked out on the night, and, seeing him standing there, had given him a civil ‘good night,’ not recognizing him, but obeying the courteous custom of the country. Of what happened after that the man knew nothing, save from conjecture.

After speaking to the miner Redwood turned to his desk again. Between the lamps, with the lights focused on it, lay a scrap of drawing-paper on which was traced what seemed to be a plan of grounds of some

sort. Redwood dropped into his chair and bent over it: his brows were drawn together, and he went over some calculations on the margin of the paper with the care which strives to make certainty more certain. Then he took his pencil and traced, near the center of the sketch, a tree, and from it drew lines, in two directions, extending to that which looked to be an enclosure. This done, he folded the paper and placed it in the breast pocket of his coat, lifted the day-book and ledger from the desk and, rising, locked them securely in the safe; then he glanced about the room to see that everything was in order, laid the mail in readiness for the boy whose business it was to go to the postoffice, and, finally extinguished the lights and left the office.

As he stepped out into the night he remembered that his manager had come to him with the report of an unsafe gallery and the suggestion that the matter should be looked into at once. He had promised to give the thing personal attention, and had ordered that the hands should be kept out of that

part of the mine and that no explosives should be used until a thorough inspection should have been made. It was one of the abandoned galleries and had not been re-timbered since he took the mine—some props had been added, but that was all. The leads in that direction were almost worthless, the ore being mixed with copperas and bluestone. The security of the gallery was, however, important, not only to the mine, but because it extended, laterally, for several hundred yards under a much used country road, and any caving of the highway would occasion expense and inconvenience.

Redwood walked to the mouth of the shaft. He noticed that one of the buckets was down, but attached no importance to the fact, knowing that they frequently were left at the bottom of the shaft already loaded with ore when the time came to stop work. There is never any conscientious restlessness in negroes about leaving a job unfinished.

Redwood turned away to get his horse; passing around the corner of the engine-house on his way to the shed which served

for a stable. He had readily fallen into the habit of the country which required a horse for every transit, no matter how short the distance. His eye fell on a man, slouched against the house-side, apparently asleep. He did not speak to him, but went on for the horse, standing ready saddled, mounted, and rode away into the forest.

About a mile from the mine the road forked, one branch leading to Eagle's Nest and the other diverging, and crossing the wood road which led to Broadoaks past the old church. When he reached the Eagle's Nest turn, Redwood touched his horse with the spur, for the animal evidenced a decided disposition stableward, and rode straight on. The moonlight was clear and lucent; the few clouds lying so thin that they cast no shadow. Even under the trees, the way was distinctly visible; through the branches the stars showed faint and far away; their light eclipsed by that of the moon. The forest seemed filled with sound, the jarring of tree-frogs, the cry of whip-poor-wills, and the monotonous hooting of owls; bats flew low.

circling among the tree stems; a shadow flitted across an open space where the moonlight lay, showing that a fox had left his covert. The path was good, and the horse covered the ground with speed.

Redwood rode straight to the old burying-ground, dismounted, fastened his horse to the limb of a tree, outside the gate, and entered the enclosure. He had been there many times during the preceding months and on a similar errand. The prejudice and sentiment—stupidity, it seemed to him, of the entire population, had combined to force him, or so he imagined, to unusual and nocturnal methods for the verification of a fact which the exercise of a modicum of common sense would have enabled him to establish, or disprove, in open daylight, and with little trouble. And what maddened him was the thought that, while standing in his light, these senseless idiots were standing doubly in their own, and that even though he should demonstrate this fact to them they would, in all probability, continue to obstruct the initial steps of his enterprise.

That the story told by the Memnon jeweler was correct in its main issue he now believed beyond a peradventure, and he only desired to satisfy himself of the trend of the deposit and procure specimens of the ore for analysis. With his mind clear on these two points he would push his suit with Rebie Kennedy, and, through her, work for the annihilation of a senseless bit of sentiment, or, if that result should be beyond him, at all events, the removal of its obstructiveness. The glimpse which he had obtained into that which he supposed to be the arcana of the girl's nature had given him renewed hope. He would "fight the devil with fire" he told himself, and smiled with a consciousness of power, and the thought that he had at last secured a fulcrum for his will. Sentiment should meet sentiment in the issue, and love for the living should try conclusions with tenderness for the memory of the dead. When he should be able to bring about this crisis he had no fear as to the result.

In his calculations Redwood was guilty of the ordinary human blunder of gifting his

own will with omnipotence. And of blindness to the fact that the limitations of the material militate against a man's getting all of the forces of life into the grasp of his hand.

CHAPTER XVIII.

REDWOOD proceeded at once to the church, took a key from his pocket, unlocked it and entered. The lock was an old-fashioned brass affair of the sort prevalent with most of the doors of the neighborhood, and Redwood had easily found a key at Eagle's Nest which would fit it. The light in the building was dim, owing to the tall, narrow windows being overgrown with ivy, long trails of which hung through many a broken pane; but Redwood was perfectly familiar with the place. He ascended the pulpit steps and opened the heavy wooden door, pausing for a moment, as it swung from his hand, to strike a light. The pulpit floor, raised about three feet above the level of the chancel, which in turn was a foot above that of the body of the church, was half covered with dirt, a pile of which was heaped beside a loose plank which stuck up as though it had been roughly pryed from its place. The

flicker of the match in Redwood's hands gave the rent an uncanny resemblance to an open grave with the earth heaped up beside it. Redwood lighted a lantern, of the sort used by policemen, and took from a corner a spade and other implements for digging, and also a heavy rubber blanket like those used by miners and ranchmen for camping purposes. He took the lantern also, thinking that there might be need of it ere his task should be completed.

The force of habit caused him to lock the door and put the key in his pocket. His horse whinnied as he stepped out into the moonlight and sidled around, jerking his bridle taut, and pulling against the limb, as though under the stress of excitement. Redwood spoke to him, and, laying his implements on the ground, went out to see what could have occasioned his uneasiness. Then he became suddenly conscious that nature shared the unrest and that he himself was becoming infected with the general feeling. The air was hushed and breathless, the woods silent with the stillness that precedes

convulsion; not a twig stirred, not a leaf or blossom moved, not a night-bird nor insect sounded a note. He could feel the flesh of the horse quiver as the animal pressed against him, and, involuntarily, he laid hold of the bit lest terror should cause the beast to break away. Then he waited, perfectly collected, and able to observe his own sensations and those of nature. He knew from experience the symptoms of the coming phenomenon and awaited the result.

In a moment it came; the long, sickening shiver, the rocking and vibrating, accompanied by the rumble and roar of imprisoned forces, the distinct throes, as of a monster in pain, as the earthquake passed under foot, and the closing vibrations as it rolled away toward the northeast.

Redwood waited, soothing the horse, until all immediate danger of a recurrence of the shocks seemed to be over. The loss of time made him restive. It almost appeared as if the forces of the universe, spiritual and material, were arrayed against the accomplishment of his purpose. He had half a

mind to loosen the bridle and let the horse find his way back to his stall; but, apart from the aversion every man has, when it comes to the point, to letting his horse wander about the woods and fields with the saddle on, there was an unacknowledged undercurrent of consciousness that the vitality and nearness of the creature was a relief and comfort. It gave the feeling of companionship with something living and finite which even the boldest and strongest men will crave when engaged in strange or hazardous undertakings.

After awhile he re-entered the enclosure and carried the things taken from the pulpit to the grave, opened a few weeks before. It was a part of the ill-luck that had dogged his quest from first to last, Redwood thought, that he should have been away from the neighborhood when that grave had been made. Had he been on the spot then, the necessity for that which he was about to do would have been obviated. It was irritating to think of.

He had made examinations in several directions, taking bearings from the English oak,

and making his excavations under cover of those old, marble slabs which seemed fashioned for the concealment of secrets. The search had been only partially successful, the gravel yielding enough ore to dangle hope before his eyes, but not near enough, in Redwood's opinion, to justify the origination of that story of auriferous spadefuls. Before his departure for the North he had marked this spot, feeling certain, from directions and indications, that here, if anywhere outside of old Dr. Kennedy's own resting-place, the vein might be crossed. On his return he had been too busy at the mine to have time for his more personal monomania, and then had discovered that there had been an interment in the very spot which he wished to examine.

When the idea of that which he was doing had first occurred to Redwood he had thrust it aside with a natural human shrinking; but the haunting of that dream of gold and the visions which would keep rising of the delights and above all of the *power* attendant on the possession of gold, combined with the threatened failure of his hopes at the mine,

had operated to weaken and finally to overthrow the instinct of respect and, almost, awe, which the dead, by the mere fact of that mysterious change, seem potent to impose upon the living. The thought, once entertained, had speedily become assimilated and, as would be inevitable in a nature such as Redwood's, had resulted in execution. With action had come additional blunting of the sensibilities until the man had come to feel the influences in connection with the Broad-oaks graveyard to be simply so many obstacles to be swept out of the track of his will.

An hour passed; then another—the night deepened toward dawn: the moonlight waned, slipping through the branches with a pale glimmer that foretold its withdrawal; the interval approached during which there would be the silent struggle for supremacy of opposing lights. A mist began to rise, slowly, an inch at a time, lifted by surface currents of air. The worker in the graveyard toiled on. There had been little rain since the burial, and the soil had not become compacted, so

that its removal was not difficult. Redwood had spread the blanket beside the grave and cast the earth out on it. He did not wish to give himself unnecessary trouble in removing traces of his work. Every now and then he would pause and flash the light of his lantern on the sides of the pit and on the soil as he cast it out. Occasionally he would take up portions and throw them into a specimen bag which lay beside his coat on the grave of the old negro who had been drowned so long ago.

The pit deepened so that the worker stood to his knees—then to his waist, and, slowly, lower, until his shoulders barely reached the verge: the spade struck against wood. Suddenly there was a half-smothered ejaculation, and the light was concentrated in one corner of the grave—he had found that which he sought!

Away in the woods a bird stirred and began his morning call—"sweetheart! sweetheart!" he seemed to say and another bird answered. The mist had risen to the tree-tops and hung white, like wraiths of rain-

clouds. From the hill-side, where a path came down through the laurel-brakes, there came the sound of a stumble, as though, under a heavy tread, a stone had turned and slipped out of place; and twigs snapped as though roughly grasped and parted. The horse moved and gave a low whinnying call that had in it a note of impatience, and recognition.

Redwood drove his spade in, bracing his back against the side of the grave, and pressing on it with his foot. A quantity of earth fell with a soft thud on the corner of the box which contained the coffin, a portion of which was uncovered. Among it was a fragment of quartz which Redwood raised and held in the light. It was seamed with gold, in thin threads, and in one place the metal had collected in a tiny shining nugget. Redwood's lips parted in a hard red line; his breath came quick through his dilating nostrils; the gold-fever burned in his veins and flamed in his eyes. He snatched up a pick and bent eagerly to his work. A small segment of the quartz vein was visible and he strove to clear away

the earth sufficiently to observe its direction with more accuracy.

What was that? It sounded like the click of a latch, hastily let fall! Was that the tread of feet brushing through the grass where the mist lay collected into dewdrops? What was it that neared the grave and bent over, gazing down on the stooping figure below?

Redwood had bared the vein for a little space and was using the point of his pick as a wedge to pry off a partially dislodged fragment of the rock. His attention was concentrated; absorbed by the work he had in hand: he was alike unconscious of the coffin beneath his feet and of danger which menaced him from above. His head was bare: on his forehead the moisture stood in beads, like rain-drops on marble.

A dark hand stole downward for the spade which leaned against the side of the grave; a dark face, convulsed with passion, loomed threateningly through the mist. There was a swift blow, driven down with the point of the implement, followed by a long shudder-

ing cry that cleft the silence and seemed to quiver away through space like a thing of life.

The horse, driven well-nigh frantic by this second terror, snorted, reared, tore his rein from its fastening and dashed away into the mist-enshrouded woods at a headlong gallop.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE earthquake shock while, of itself, not severe enough to cause any material disturbance had been potent to effect a serious change where the conditions had been favorable. The condemned gallery at the Lone Jack mine had settled solidly down for the space of a quarter of a mile; broken timbers, earth and *débris* filling the cavity in what looked to be a hopeless mass. The subsidence had commenced a trifle beyond the point where the new supports stopped; about thirty yards from the main shaft, and what had been a public road was now a long, unsightly gash in the surface of the earth.

And about the mine there was great excitement, for two men were missing.

The news circled like a fiery cross; sped by the strange system of verbal telegraph prevalent among negroes. It produced considerable consternation and a general rally to the mine, every man in the community, white and

colored, being intent on the gratification of his curiosity, and anxious to render such service, in the emergency, as might be in his power.

“This is terrible news about Redwood,” Edward Kennedy remarked as he helped his brother to dismount near the engine-house. He had separated himself from the group of men around the shaft and come forward when he saw Colonel Kennedy ride up. His eyes were troubled and his jovial face was clouded with anxiety. For the time, he felt, as did every man on the ground, gentle and simple, that Redwood was no stranger swept from their midst, but a friend who had partaken of their bread and salt, and who had been cut down untimely.

“Is it certain that he was in the mine?” Colonel Kennedy inquired.

“Almost positive. There is nothing else to conclude. He can’t be found anywhere; and he was known to be in his office a short time before the shock. One of the men saw him there as late as half past ten, or thereabouts. As soon as the subsidence was discovered,

which was pretty soon after the shock, for the manager had that gallery on his mind, they sent over to Eagle's Nest for Redwood. He wasn't there—hadn't been there. This morning his horse was found close by here, still saddled. He is usually fastened to a hook under that shed. The bridle was broken, and it is pretty certain he jerked loose under terror of the shock. The horse being here proves that Redwood didn't leave the place. If he had the horse would have been found in the Eagle's Nest stable."

"Was anyone with him? We heard a negro was missing also."

"There is—our man, Patrick." He used the appropriative pronoun from force of habit. "Pat attended to Redwood's horse during the day. He raised the colt for Dick Kennedy and was fond of him. The hands say Pat spoke of going home last night; his half-sister was ailing and sent him word to come. He must have changed his mind, however, for the woman says he didn't put in an appearance. Since that spell of rheumatism he had in March Pat has worked

above ground; he was employed about the engine-house. He must have been about there last night and gone down with Redwood. There was an empty bucket in the shaft this morning."

The brothers moved forward to the mouth of the shaft. They were met and surrounded by a crowd of eager talkers—conjectures, assertions and explanations were rife, and a theory of events for the night before was evolved which appeared to meet the general requirements.

It was quite clear, they said, that Redwood had been troubled about that gallery. He had given orders about it and proposed to make a thorough examination of the place himself within the next few hours. His headman, the foreign miner whom he had installed as general superintendent, under himself, had been talking to him until quite late, and together they had sketched a plan for improvements in all the galleries in the old part of the mine, and had made calculations. Left to himself, Redwood must have become interested, or troubled, about some

particular point and have decided on satisfying himself by instant examination. He was an imperious man—was Redwood—and must always carry his point as speedily as might be. He was different from the men of the community, who were generally willing to take things easy, and to come gradually to an exertion, when not under the stress of violent emotion. With this idea of prompt verification of something or other, dominating him, Redwood had gone down into the mine; taking the negro with him, and been somewhere in the gallery when the shock had come.

When this climax would be reached, the voices would grow pitiful; it was such a horrible fate to overtake a man in the discharge of his duty. That was the way they spoke of it; deploring his excess of zeal, and giving him credit for an overweening sense of responsibility toward his employers, and toward the miners under his charge.

“We-all never done Redwood jestice, I reckon,” drawled Jerry Kitchen, looking thoughtfully into the black mouth of the

shaft. "He war a mighty headin' sort o' chap, an' liked to move things right along ther road he blazed out; but he warn't no shirk hisse'f n'other. Ef he seed a fence, an' aimed to cross it, he'd clinch ther bit an' dash ahead. He'd git thar—or bu'st tryin'."

"Thet's so!" acquiesced Luke; all unwitting of the hand which he and his brother had had in bringing down on the unfortunate man, whose supposed fate they deplored, a catastrophe infinitely more horrible.

"Can *nothing* be done?"

Colonel Kennedy's tone as he made the demand was sharp: he looked around upon them with coercive eyes. A vision of his daughter's face, when Crum had burst in upon them with the news haunted him. He did not understand yet the extent of the harm, but he dumbly felt that it might be far-reaching. And then the idea of standing supine while men lay crushed under that horrible mass was unendurable.

The manager was below, they told him. He had been in the mine for hours, and relays

of volunteers had followed him at intervals. There were forty men, all told, examining the mine and doing their best to discover the extent of the damage, and if there were any possibility of hope. Tom Kennedy had gone down with the last batch. They only waited for directions: fifty men stood ready to work until they should drop if a point of departure could be given them.

About mid-day the men began to come up out of the mine. The report they brought was very discouraging. Two other galleries—one running parallel with the ruined lead, and one intersecting it, were pronounced unsafe: the shock had unsettled all the old part of the mine, so that much work would be necessary should the company continue operations; every bit of old timber in the place had started. A recurrence of the shock would cause all the galleries on that side of the shaft to collapse.

When asked whether there was, in his opinion, any hope for the men supposed to be buried below, the manager shook his head. No hope at all, he said, the gallery had been

in a very bad condition and the wreck appeared to be absolute. Even if the precise spot in which the men were, at the time of the accident, could be determined, any effort could only be for the recovery of the bodies. The other men, who had shared in the examination concurred with him, and a sense of hopelessness and futility gradually disseminated itself through the throng. There seemed nothing to be done. Men spoke in lowered tones, and when they rode away, by two and threes, leaving only the regular force in possession of the mine, they held their horses to a walk as in the custom when riding from a grave.

The three Kennedy's rode homeward together. They spoke little by the way, being oppressed by a sense of catastrophe. As they were about to separate at the Broad-oaks gate Tom said slowly:

"In life I was hard on the man at times, because his ways were not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts. Death has convicted me of injustice—I beg his pardon."

He lifted his hat and sat silently on his horse for a moment with his head uncovered. The other men followed his example.

In their ignorance of the true state of the case they had reached conclusions tenderer and more human than would have been possible could they have known. And reverently, regretfully, one phase of the omnipresent sentiment entombed in honor the man on whom another phase had ruthlessly trampled down the earth not many hours before.

CHAPTER XX.

THE manager's telegram was responded to by a stirring young lawyer, empowered by the company to take charge of the affairs of the mine and, for the present, at least, to suspend all operations. Any effort for the recovery of the bodies, within reason, the lawyer announced, the company would be willing to make, especially as the case involved a man of as much importance to them as Mr. Stuart Redwood, and a second, and more comprehensive examination of the scene of the catastrophe was at once inaugurated. But after several days activity the new man was forced to the conclusion, already arrived at by the manager—that the matter appeared absolutely barren of hope of successful issue and that the continued expenditure of time and labor in the attempt would be abortive. As well search for an object at the bottom of the sea as for the bodies of men buried under a landslide which extended a quarter of a mile.

Redwood's affairs were found to be in perfect order, and his effects were taken charge of by the New York lawyer, to be, by him, transmitted to the young fellow's relatives in the North. He had no immediate family, and a couple of aunts in the New England village, with whom he appeared to have maintained a desultory sort of intercourse, represented the nearest of his kindred. The case seemed inexpressibly pitiful because, so far as could be ascertained, the poor young man's untimely death would bring heart sorrow to no living being.

And the old church yard held the secret, as through ages it had held the gold, deep hidden within its bosom. For when the sun had risen above the hills that August morning, lifting with shining fingers the curtain of the mist, there had been, to outward seeming, little change in the aspect of the place, and of the tragedy no evidence remained save a little loose earth, scattered about, where a grave had been hastily mounded up anew.

Of the chief actor in the scene all trace was wiped out as completely as though, in truth,

the earth, as was supposed, had swallowed him. Only, many months afterward, the newspapers had a short paragraph about the finding of a negro, by a party of hunters, in a lonely place in the mountains of southwestern Virginia. He had been in a miserably reduced condition from exposure and want, and would give no account of himself. He was described as a heavy, thick-set negro, slow of speech, and almost idiotic. He appeared to labor continually under morbid excitement, would shrink and shiver at a noise, and cower, as from some invisible, but ever present image of terror. It had been pronounced, by the local physician, a case of mania, super-induced by unknown, probably physical, causes, and the man had been consigned to the insane ward of the county poor-house, where he died.

To Rebie the shock had been grievous, and she was a long time in recovering from it. In the first horror of the news the thought of Redwood's death caused her such pain that she mistook sympathetic realization of its pathos for a deeper emotion and was well-

nigh persuaded that she loved him. But as time went on her vision cleared and a more accurate perception of the relations of things was born within her. The romantic trend of her imagination made her unwilling, for a time, to acknowledge to herself that the powerful influence which Redwood had exercised over her had been intellectual fascination; the attraction of the unaccustomed rather than more fervid emotion.

Their last interview would return, during the weeks immediately following Redwood's death, and haunt her with a feverish persistence which quickened her imagination into a strange fancy of spiritual presence, and of being still under the dominion of his will. This state of mind reacted upon her nerves and produced a depression and languor which misled Colonel Kennedy entirely, and troubled him no little.

"I'm afraid she loved that fellow," he remarked to his eldest daughter in an anxious tone, as Rebie passed the window, looking very pale and abstracted. "She seems to

be wilting away, like a half parched plant."

But Bernard had truer insight.

"No," she said slowly, "she did not love him. He loved *her*; and he filled her imagination more full of new pictures and interests than it had ever been before. Rebie has been in a state of tension for months past—first with Mr. Redwood, then with Geoffrey Bruce, and now with Mr. Redwood again. This is the reaction—it would have inevitably come; even without the terrible shock we have all experienced. Give her time to work the matter out for herself. My own belief is that Rebie's heart has, as yet, been only stirred upon the surface. She is unconscious of the fact herself; but she isn't in love with anyone."

"I wish Geoff Bruce were here," fretted the father, feeling very helpless and utterly incompetent to cope with the situation. "He might help to arouse her interest and renew her grip on life."

Bernard smiled indulgently. A man's lack of comprehension of feminine subtleties always touched her with amusement.

“Geoff’s cause will prosper best without his presence,” she declared. “He would certainly begin to make love to her again if he were here, and that would be, in her present state of mind, about the worst blunder he could commit. Let me take her away for a month. The Richard Kennedys have gone down to Virginia Beach, and Cousin Clara would look after us. Everything would be different—utterly unconnected with the people and events that have filled the last few months for her. The new influences will help her mind to recover its tone.”

And so it was decided. Only Colonel Kennedy, still persisting in the idea which dominated him, remarked, when preliminaries had been arranged:

“Don’t you think, Bernard, that Geoff might run down to Virginia Beach for a day or so toward the *end* of your visit? He might come the last few days, you know, and escort you and Rebie home.”

His daughter bestowed a kiss on the top of his handsome head, where the gray hair was wearing thin, and softly patted his shoulder.

“What a match-making old father it is!” she smiled, “and how persistent in his schemes. Well, yes—perhaps he might come. At the very last, you understand. I’ll write and let you know. She will relish the sight of a home face by that time. We both will.”

Her smile deepened; and a beautiful tender expression stole into her eyes. The father watched her, with a feeling of comfort, and the thought that Bernard was a wise and loving woman in whose hands the matter might be left with safety. And his mind went back into the past and lingered over his own love time, and his daughter seemed to him to have a look of her mother.

THE END.





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